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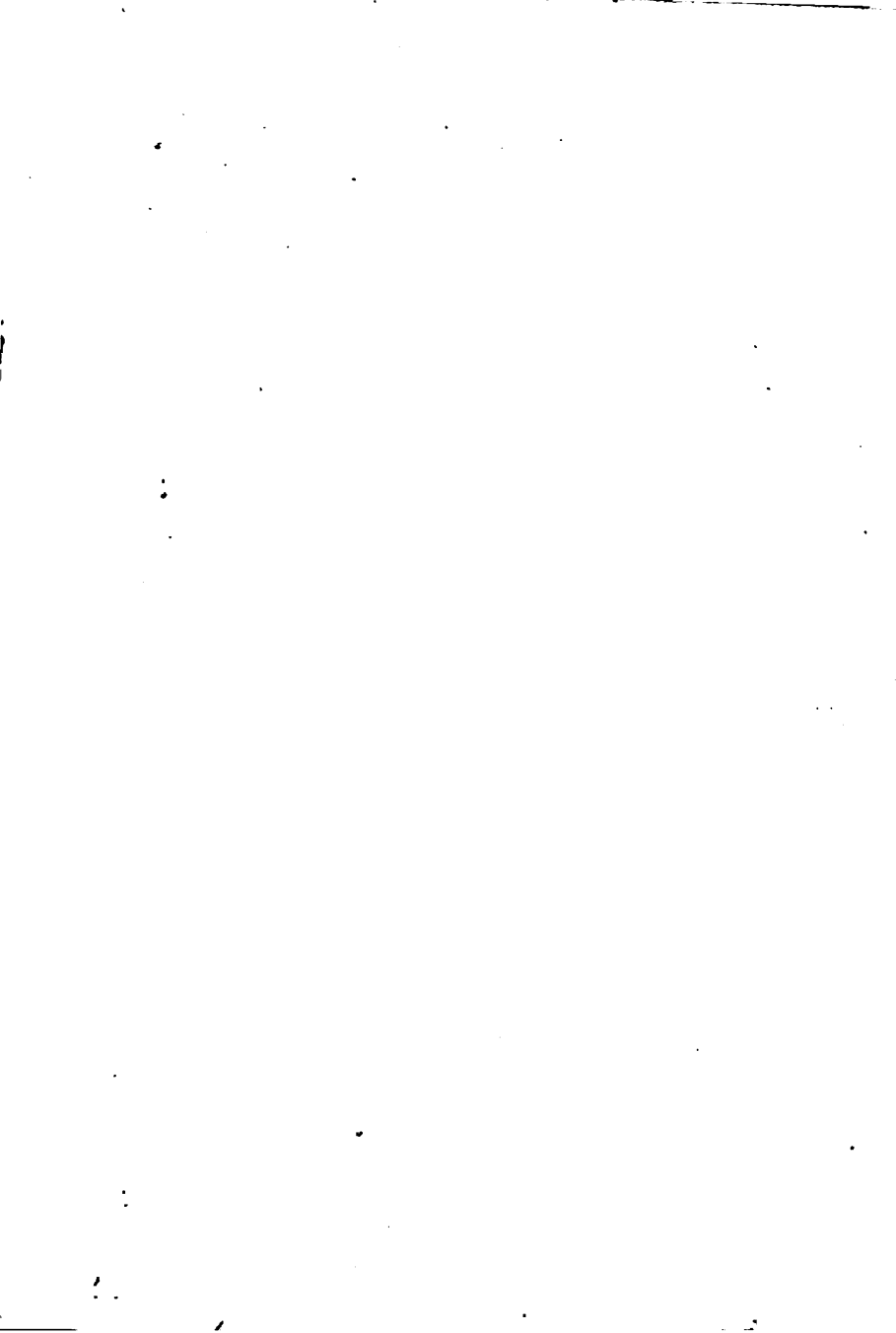
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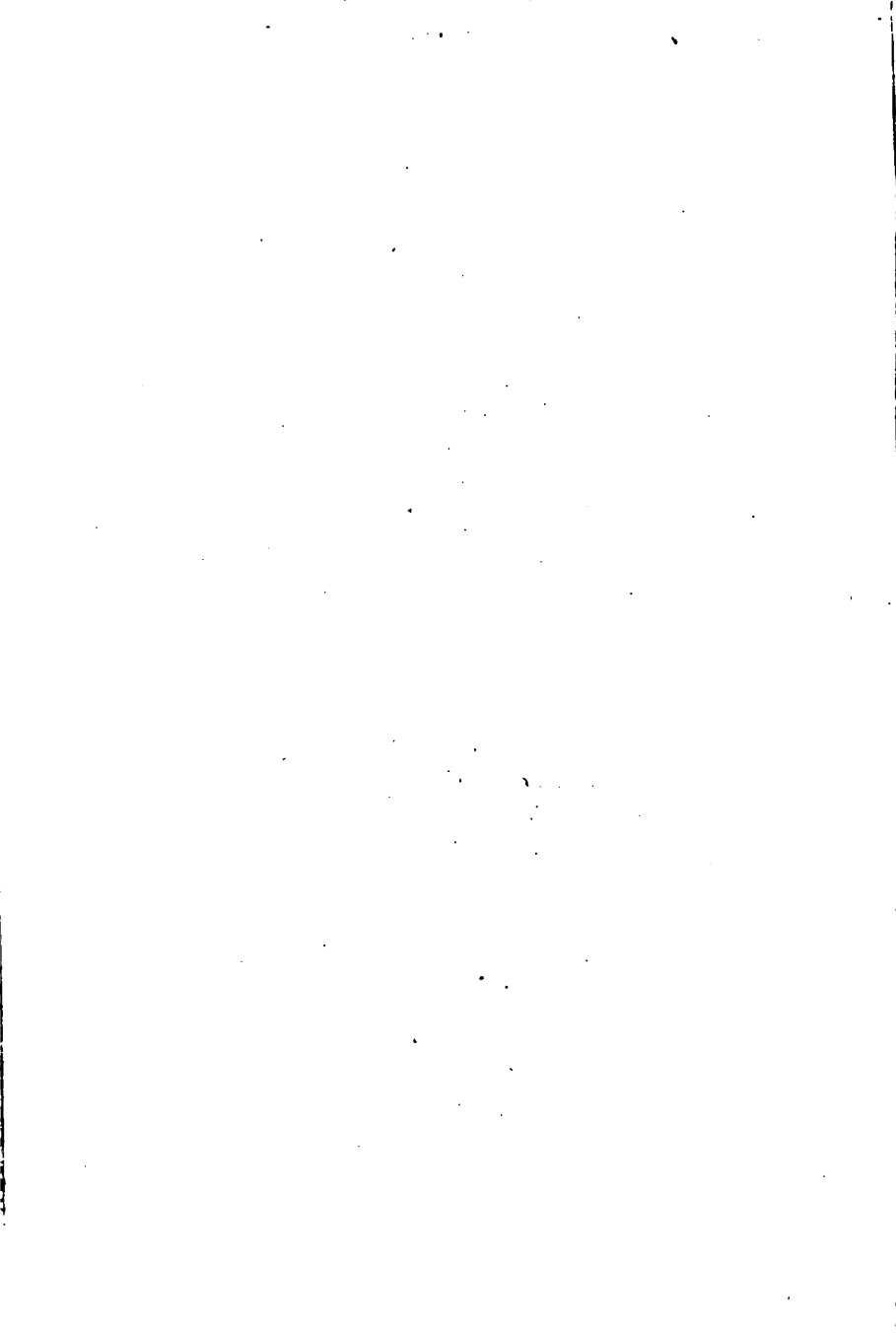
A
BUNCH
OF BERRIES
AND THE
DIVERSIONS THEREOF



LEADER SCOTT

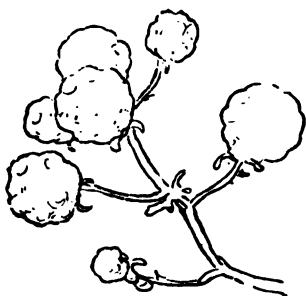








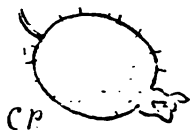
A



BUNCH OF BERRIES

AND

THE DIVERSIONS THEREOF



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"They . . . found their progress stopped by a great wall of cliff."

AUTHOR INDEX

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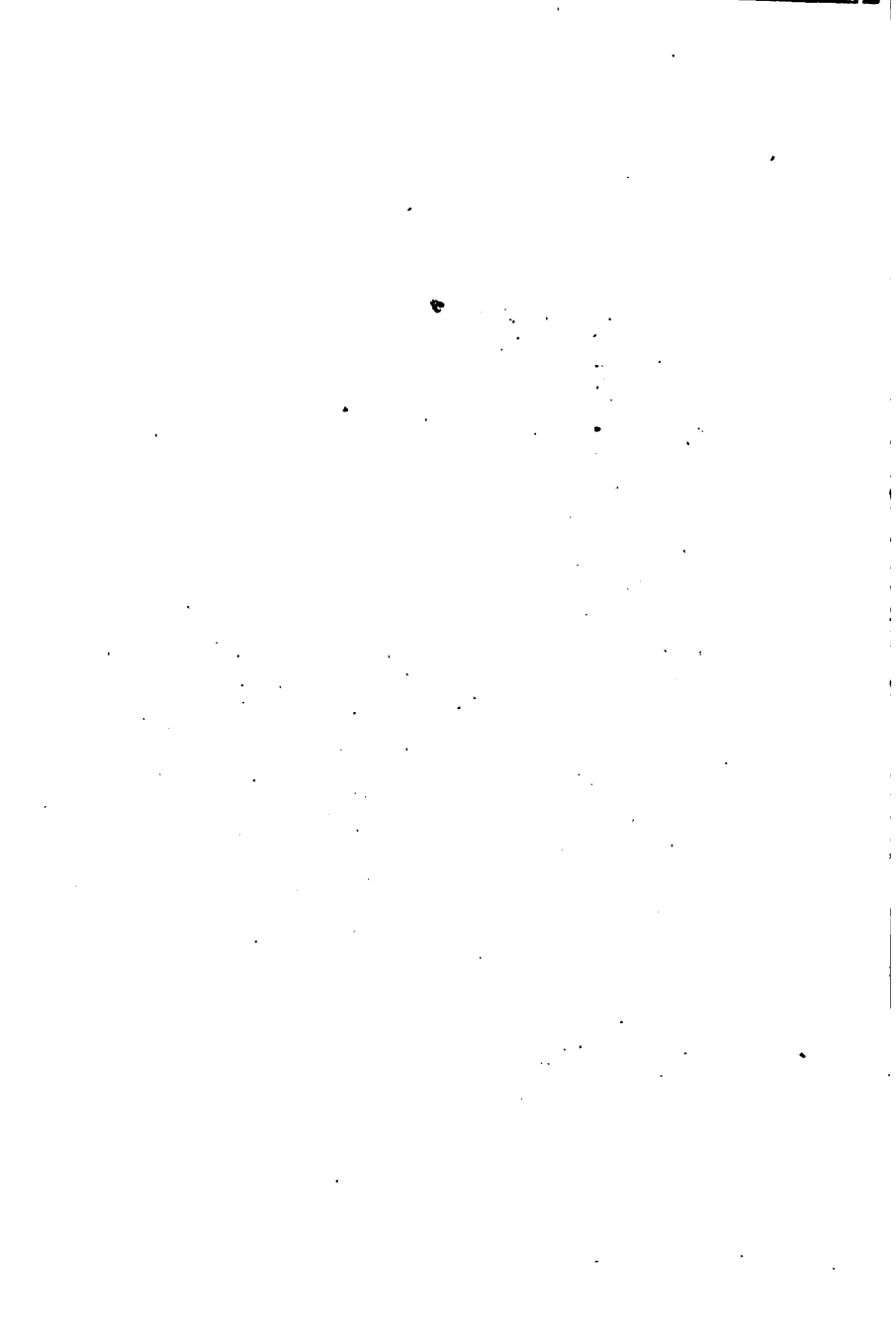
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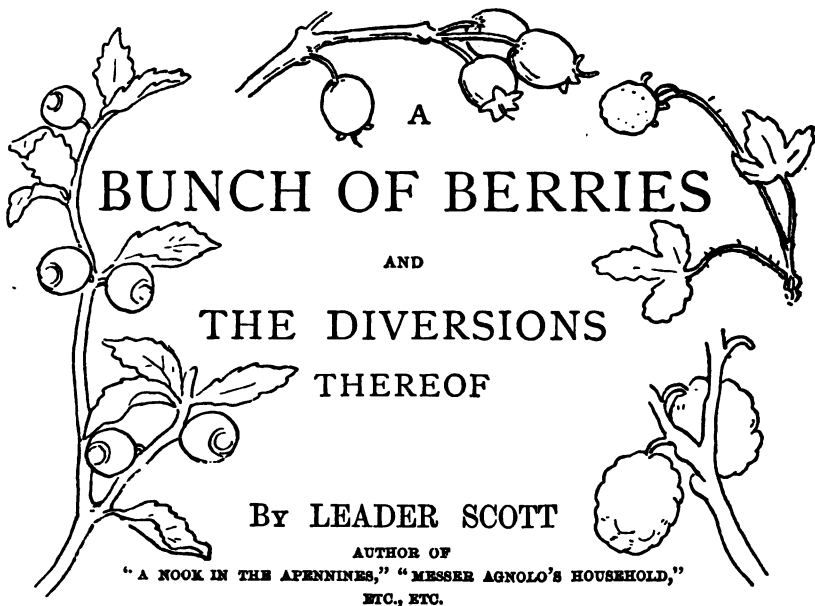
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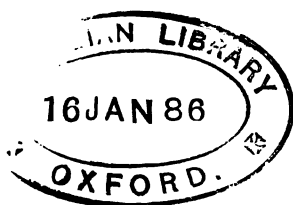
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Preface to Child Readers.

MY DEAR BOYS AND GIRLS,

THIS book is written entirely for you ; the elders have nothing to do with it, except to make you a present of it, and blame me if you are not amused by it, so I address my preface to you too.

First you must know that I did not write the book all myself, but several little boys and girls whom I love very much helped me, not only by their funny sayings and doings, and their queer fancies, which gave me something to talk about, but by their very own stories, written by themselves, and illustrated too. So you see the book is about as much

my composition as a nosegay of flowers would be mine, if the children each brought a blossom from their own garden to put amongst the ones I had plucked myself.

One day these eight little people coaxed me to write a book for them, saying it "was not fair to give all the books with pictures in them to the grown-up people." But when we came to talk of what the work was to be like, there were as many opinions as there were persons. The boys said, "Do not make it all dolls and fairies and girls' stuff,—let us have some adventures or stories about knights in it;" and the girls exclaimed, "Please let it have either fairy stories or something about real children." The "pickle of a boy" cried, "I say! I hope you won't write a goody-goody sort of a book, whatever you do;" and the tender-hearted little girl said, "Pray do not let all the good children die,—I don't like the stories that make me cry." Then the "tiny mites" lisped, "Let it be

about real children like us, with dolls, and make some dear little girls that cannot speak plain, like Stumps." ("Stumps", you must know, is the tiny mites' favourite book.) "And," added several voices at once, "we don't want a long story all through a big book, like a novel,—we get sick of it before we can find out what the end is going to be; besides, we always skip the dry descriptions, and then can't make out the story."

"Well," I replied, "it will take more than one person to satisfy so many tastes, so you must help me."

Some declared they couldn't, and others would if they could; but at last they decided to let me look over the stores of the family scribblers, and here I found a very unique collection of manuscripts, illustrated with remarkable drawings, from which several were chosen; and I here return thanks to the authors of 'Edie's Sparrow' (age 15), 'A Repentant Sinner, but too Late' (age 14), 'The Fattest

Man' (age 11), 'Sydney's Adventures' (age $9\frac{1}{2}$), 'Bright Moon in Search of a Fortune' (age 8), 'A Dredful Ogur' (age 6), and 'The Doll and the Flowers' (age $3\frac{1}{2}$), and hope their stories will amuse many other "young folks."

As to the children, they are all as real as they can be. I know them every one; and the adventures are as real as the children, for if they did not happen to the Berries themselves, they happened to their friends when they were young, and a great many more droll adventures besides.

LEADER SCOTT.





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A Bunch of Berries

AND

The Diversions thereof.

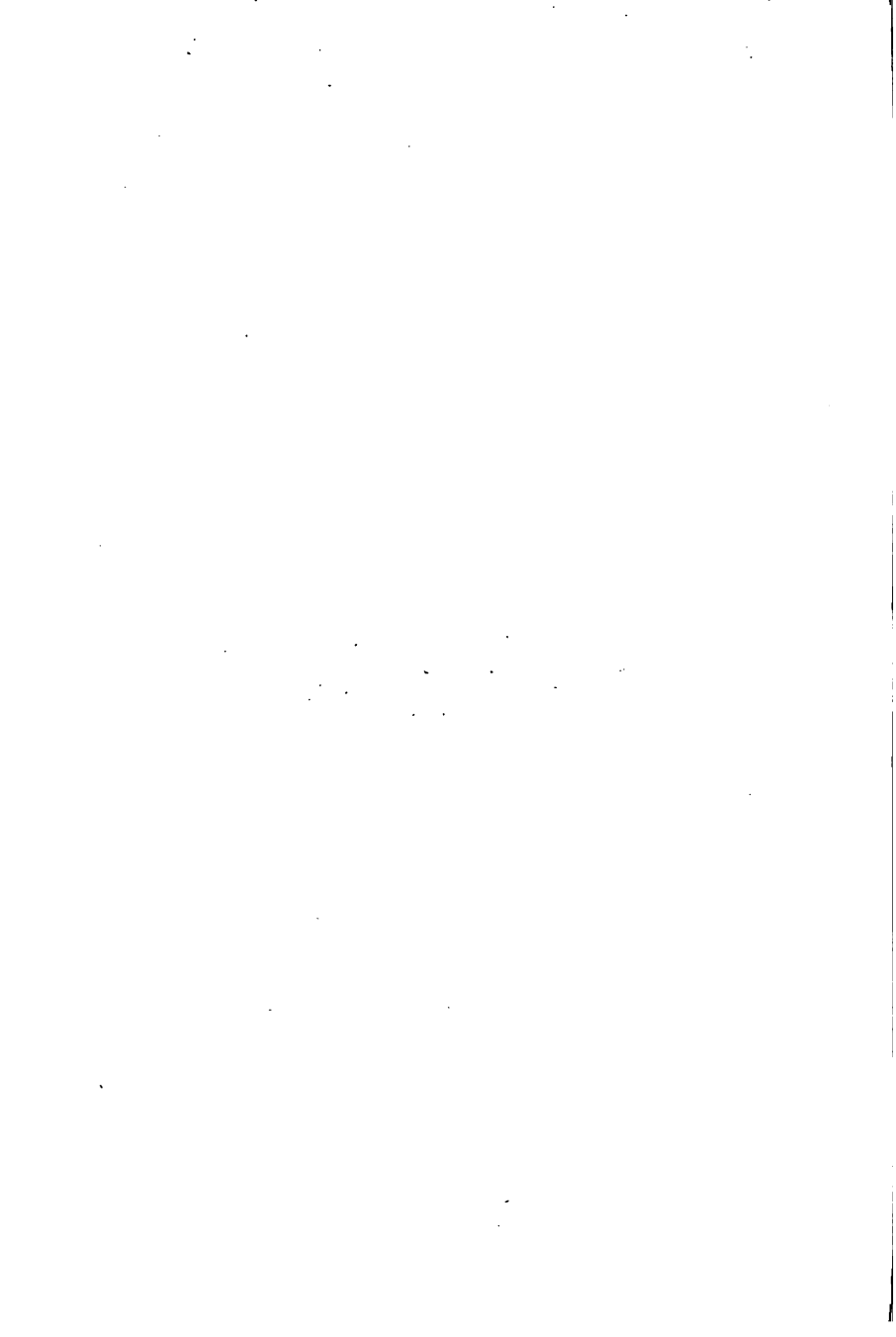




PART I.

The Children's Sayings and Doings.







A BUNCH OF BERRIES.



CHAPTER I.

ALL ABOUT THE BERRIES.



Of course you must have already imagined that they were not really berries, for if they had been they could have had very few diversions.

For instance, it is not very amusing to hang on a tree for the hailstones to pelt or the birds to peck, nor is it a pleasant idea that when you have grown

nice and rosy you are the more likely to be eaten up by children as rosy as yourself. No! my Berries *were* children, and there were eight of them. Hubert, Harry, and Minna, the children of Mr. Charles Berrie, lived in the country; and Mr. Herbert Berrie's family of five in the town. But as the country cousins were often in town, and the town ones made frequent visits to the country, it was nearly as good as being all one family, for they had all their best games and fun together.

There was a great deal of imagination among them, their nursery reading having chiefly consisted of fairy books; indeed, I think it must have been a very clever writer who could invent a fairy enchantment which these young critics would have thought original. The only exception to this was Hubert, who took life so very seriously that he never played a make-believe game, and despised all fairy stories because he was sure they would not be true. Do not think from this that the others did not love truth too. The difference was that he despised everything which was not *fact*, and they delighted in all kinds of fancies in play; but as soon as it came to real life, no children were more truthful and honourable.

The family imagination showed itself in a constant

invention of new games; indeed, they seemed to scorn any play which was not original. One day Mrs. Berrie found the two little ones playing what they called "the angel." One of them was lying as if dead upon two chairs, while the other in a white night-gown and pair of huge paper wings, came as an angel to carry her soul away. That was thought a delightful game, but it soon gave way to a more worldly one of a gipsy stealing little children. But the greatest imagination showed itself in myths. There was hardly a tree or an object which was not made into a personage by these curious children. A hollow tree in the garden was supposed to be inhabited by a cousin Julia, who was a kind of oracle, for if any of the children went into the abode of Julia, they were sure to come out with some new idea or droll story, which they made believe cousin Julia had told them.

Mrs. Berrie's greatest bugbear was a certain mythical sister, who was supposed to live in a favourite corner of the nursery, and who was said to have brought up a large family of children on peculiar principles. If Mrs. Berrie refused Elsie or Willie a second slice of cake, they would say: "Ah, you should see our fairy sister's children, they are allowed as much cake as ever they like; indeed they eat so much that

sometimes they ask for a bit of bread and butter as a treat." If they were called to lessons they would sigh, "Ah, our fairy sister's children never have any nasty lessons, they just play and do as they like all day. And last week they made a bonfire of all the lesson-books, because their mamma found that learning too much addled their brains." On which Mrs. Berrie replied, "I am glad to say my children's brains are stronger, and will, I think, be more clever than those poor silly things of your sister."

Then they were always getting up societies, such as a "Drawing Club," in which stories were written, and all the nouns put in in drawing. Then there were the "Secret Language Societies," whose writings and language were invented, and took a long time to learn and a short time to forget. Next came the "Flower Legend Society," all the members of which invented stories about flowers; and the "Doll's Clothes Dorcas Society," &c.

Another favourite mode of exercising the family imagination was in the invention of new names; and oh! the mania everybody had to make believe they were other somebodies! The eight cousins came out so often in new characters, that their mothers were very much puzzled to tell who was who in the nursery conversations. One week they

were all legendary heroes, and "Undine" pulled "Sintram's" hair, or "Snow-white" trod on "Kuhleborn's" toes; the next they had all turned to flowers, and mother would be told that "Daffodil" did not know her lesson, and "Poppy" would eat no dinner. At length a bright idea struck them.

"I'm tired of being a flower," cried Elsie; "let us be something else now."

"We will be all the people in the 'Arabian Nights,' shall we?" asked Minna.

"No; they have such crack-jaw names, that even if we could pronounce them we never could write them," said Harry.

"Let us be berries then; I will be Elderberry, because I am eldest of the family," said Sibyl.

"Well, as we are really berries, I think that's more sensible than most of your romantic ideas," assented Hubert, taking out his pencil and note-book. "Let us tabulate our facts, as the master says; what shall I be?"

"Hawberry, because you hem and haw at all our games so," said impudent Harry.

"And you shall be Strawberry, because you are not to be depended upon any more than a straw," retorted his brother.

"I am going to be Raspberry, because I like it, so

you need not try to find a reason for that," laughed Minna.

"No; they say girl's likings are not to be accounted for," quoth Hubert, gravely writing.

"Call me Blackberry," said Elsie.

"Better be Dewberry, because you are so often be-dewed with tears," replied Harry.

"What shall I be?" cried Freddie.

"Why, Gooseberry to be sure, you goose," said his cousin.

"You have taken all the bewies, and left none for me and Dollie," exclaimed Lollie.

"Oh, yes; you can be Bilberry and Mulberry, you are rather apt to make a 'mull' of most things.—Now let us see how we look," and Hubert showed his list as follows :

THE CHARLES BERRIES.

THE HERBERT BERRIES.

		Elderberry	Sibyl
		Blackberry	Elsie
Hawberry	Hubert	Gooseberry	Freddie
Strawberry	Harry	Bilberry	Lollie (Laura)
Raspberry	Minna	Mulberry	Dorothy

The idea pleased the council so well that the law was passed that those names should never be changed again.

And now, if you like, you can skip all the rest of

this chapter and go on to the next, where the real story begins ; but if you want to have the portraits of all the Berries, you had better just have patience to read straight on, and I will draw them.

The brothers Hubert and Harry were two famous boys, as fond of each other as they were of climbing, jumping, rowing, swimming, and every other kind of motion which seems to be needful to boy nature. Hubert was calm and cool, Harry excitable and hot, which was a very lucky division, because when Harry had got into a squabble and began to be worsted in a school-fight, Hubert could calmly walk forward and knock his adversary down for him, and judiciously inquire into the rights of the case—afterwards. If he found on inquiry that he had punished the wrong boy, he was quite as fair in making all due apologies, and in punishing the right one in his turn. He had a fair open countenance, that never failed to look his sternest judge in the face ; he never said an unkind word, and was the tenderest champion of distressed little girls. Harry had a pair of roguish black eyes and a laughing mouth ; he was just as generous as he was tormenting, and that is saying a great deal ; for Elsie said “ he was the greatest tease in the whole world.”

Minna, whom Auntie Bell called her “ Botticelli

child," was a quaint maiden of thirteen, who ran about the fields, and knew the haunts of all the flowers. She had some secret understanding with nature, so that she was always the first to bring the violets and primroses into the house, before any one else had even seen them. She was as willing to teach the children of the village in the Sunday school as she was to play "Hi spy" with them on week-days; and if they displeased her in either case, she had no scruple in telling them so.

Now for the town Berries. Sibyl was well called Elderberry, because she enacted the part of elder sister so well. Was a bit of cake to be divided into five, the difficult task was trusted entirely to her; and as for making up quarrels, nobody was so clever as Sibyl. She was very enthusiastic, and would dance in ecstasy over a field of flowers, while a sunny day made her sing like a bird, yet so thoughtful that she was so lost in trying to seek the inner meanings of things, that she did not hear half that went on around her.

Elsie was a tall slight child of twelve years, whose character was so undeveloped that one could not imagine what she would be. At present she was a negative, and only knew what she did not like,—a great many things came under this head, however,

among which were lessons, music, work, and personal remarks on herself. Her only very strong preferences were for play, cookery, jam, doll's needlework, and fun. On the whole she was of a misty nature, and dissolved in tears as often as clouds in April.

Freddie was a decidedly peculiar boy, indeed one might have said that he was a double-boy—two different minds in one body. There was the angelic Freddie, who won every heart when he was good, and the impish Freddie, who was such an aggravating little monkey that his mother could have wept over him. She had a curious idea that neither of these was the real boy after all, but that the angel and the imp were two different dresses of the mind which he could put on and off at will, and that the real Freddie was still to be found out. The first time she had this thought, was one morning when he was about six years old. He had been very disobedient, and mother said with a sigh and shake of her head, "Oh, Freddie! it was only yesterday you promised—"

"Yes, yes, all right, mummie," cried Freddie with a beaming face, all the frowns gone like magic; "I quite forgot whether I meant to be naughty or good to-day—now, I remember, it's *good*."

Laura and Dorothy, commonly called Lollie and Dollie, were two fat rosy little things, who generally

trotted about hand in hand, and had as many ideas as their elder sisters, but had not as yet sufficient language to express them, Lollie's alphabet being without the letter R, and Dollie's lacking several letters. These two lived chiefly in the nursery, where they had several dolls more or less maimed for companions, and a nurse Martha, whom they considered a tyrant; while she looked on them as born to try her patience, although she loved them very much.

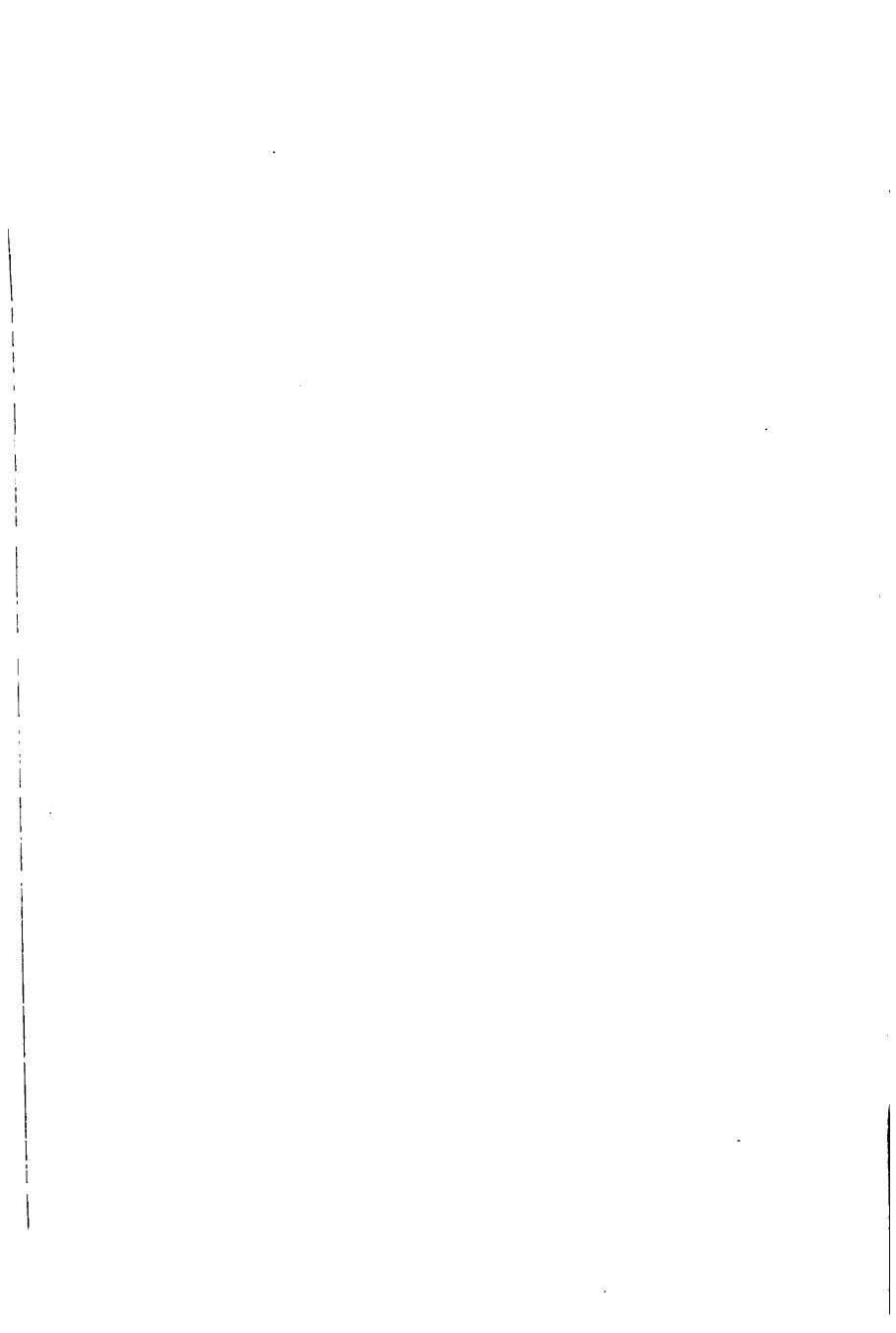
The elders, with Minna, who usually came in from the country every day, passed most of their time in the schoolroom, where a morning governess taught them for three hours a day, and a music-master came at stated times. Hubert and Harry went to the Grammar School. They had a little pony and cart-like conveyance, in which they drove their sister into town every day,—the division of labour seemed to be that Hubert should drive and Harry whip, so that between them a tolerable amount of speed was got out of the plucky little pony.

At the time our story begins, however, all the cousins were living together, and the pony-cart was left idle in the country, for Mr. and Mrs. Charles Berrie had gone abroad for a year, as Mrs. Berrie was very delicate; and Harry, Hubert, and Minna



"Lollie and Dollie lived chiefly in the nursery."

Page 12.



were placed under the care of their uncle and aunt, much to the delight of the whole eight cousins.

Would you like to know what kind of a house they lived in? Although we have called it in the town it was not quite in the street, but it stood quite away, at one end of it. A large iron gate in an ivy-wreathed wall was all that was visible from the road. The house, a very large old-fashioned brick building, stood in a beautiful garden; a carriage-drive encircled the lawn in front, and at one side was a large shrubbery, in which the children had their arbours and gymnastic apparatus. On the other side of the lawn was a cool fernery and large fountain, while at the back was the kitchen garden, which the little Berries liked best of all, for there grew the strawberries and currants, the gooseberries and the apples, which were their delight.

Now you know what the garden was like, we will come into the house, and without stopping anywhere else will go at once to the nursery,—a large sunny room, furnished with little chairs and low tables, with large cupboards full of toys,—with doll's cradles and little trunks, and last, but not least, two little girls with curly hair and white pinafores.



CHAPTER II.

NURSERY DIVERSIONS.

LOLLIE and Dollie had been playing with their dolls all the morning. It is a curious thing that Lollie's babies were always naughty, for she had a special talent for scolding and keeping people in order ; she generally liked an ugly doll better than a pretty one, for it was a maxim in the family that ugly dolls might always be called naughty, and also that ugly names were most appropriate to them.

Now Lollie's Sarah was a very plain doll indeed : her hair was so frizzed that no ribbons could keep it neat, and brushing only made it frizzier ; her eye-brows and eyelashes, her lips and rosy cheeks, were all washed away, or perhaps kissed away in the days when she had been new, pretty, and good. So her complexion was very sallow, and had a great many spots where poor Sarah had suffered blows at different times. One eye had been knocked in, and had been

crookedly replaced by Hubert, who pretended to be a German oculist on the occasion. You can imagine that a pale spotty face and a squint made Sarah quite ugly enough to be naughty, even without mentioning two broken feet and a short arm with a very dirty kid skin on it.

On this morning Lollie's doll had been extremely naughty, and was beaten because she would not say "please" to her little mamma; then she was locked up in the doll's house all by herself. This harsh treatment seemed to have broken her spirit, for only a few faint squeaks were heard whenever Lollie found herself near Sarah's prison.

Dollie's babies were always good, for she never would own an ugly doll, and was more happy in loving and kissing than in scolding. Her waxen "Evelina" was in high favour, and sat with very staring eyes at a little table; her kid hand was laid helplessly on a plate of sugar-plums, and though she had on a feeding-bib, she required so much assistance in eating, from her mother, that it might be said the living Dollie and not the wax one was the person who most enjoyed this reward of goodness.

"I am quite wild with that naughty child of mine, she weally quite upsets my nerves," cried Lollie after a great wail, cast into space behind her. "I wonder

what mothers do when they have bad children and want to change them into better ones."

"I don't fink mofers tan change their babies when dey once have dem. I am dlad my Ebelina is a dood dirl, just see how nicely she eats her sudar-pums;" and at least two of those dainties found their way to Dollie's rosy mouth after touching the doll's faded lips.

"Don't you let Evelina eat up all those sugar-plums, Dollie, or my poor Sarah won't have not one left when she is good again." Here Lollie moved away, and a succession of screams were heard, supposed to proceed from the prison of the ill-used Sarah. "I want thum thugar-plums,—let me out, —I won't stay here any more, I *won't*, I *woon't*!"

"Mercy on us, Miss Laura, what *are* you making all that noise about? you'll frighten your ma!" exclaimed nurse, coming in with a basket of linen to mend.

"'Tisn't me, nursie," said Lollie, shrieking again.

"It is not you? and you are doing it this very minute, before my own eyes! Oh, Miss Laura, I am ashamed of you! that is a *story*!"

"No, it is not a stow, so there," cried Lollie, flushing indignantly. "You are so stupid, nurse, that you cannot tell stowies fwom play. That was

Sawah scweaming, only she has not got a voice, and so I lend her mine; now do you understand?"

The child looked so radiantly triumphant at the strength of her argument, that nurse turned away in silence—her woman's wit was very often obliged to own itself unable to compete with infantine subtilty of argument, so she made an attack on another point.

"Miss Dollie, haven't I told you not to eat so many of those nasty sugar-plums? they'll make you ill."

"I only dive them to Ebelina betause she has been so dood, that's all," replied Dollie, coolly putting a few more in her mouth.

"Goodness me!" cried nurse, "these blessed children don't know themselves from their dolls; how is one to teach them the difference between truth and lies? Well, any way, Evelina has had as many as are good for her, so we will put the rest away," she added, pulling the tiny plate from under the doll's hand with such haste that poor Evelina fell forward with a jerk, giving a resounding blow on the table with her waxen nose.

The shrieks by proxy of Evelina, and of the imprisoned Sarah, became so deafening that nurse began to think a run in the garden would be good for the children.

"You can put on your clean hats and blouses,

c

and be sure not to make them dirty. I shall come down soon and take you out for a walk."

The two little chins were held up to have the white muslin bows tied under them, and then the children trotted hand in hand to the garden, which was a good-sized enclosure, containing a lawn, a few flower-beds, and a shrubbery.

They did some amateur gardening, by picking the daisies which grew in the grass, and then their little hands being full, they sat down to play with them, and the following conversation took place.

Dollie. "Don't you wish you was drowed up big (grown up), Lollie?"

Lollie. "Yes, I do, and then nurse wouldn't always spoil our fun."

Dollie. "What makes people drow?"

Lollie. "I donno, about people, I know what makes flowers gwow, watering them, because when I asked Thomas why he frowed all the wet over the poor flowers, and made them so nasty and uncomfortable, he said, 'Why, to make them gwow, to be sure, Miss Lawa.'"

Dollie. "I wonder if we are like the flowers, and if that is what nurse sponges us all over for in the morning. Are dere any dardens to make us drow, Lollie?"

Lollie, thoughtfully, "Yes, I think so, because

mother told me that the Kindergarten she was going to send us to means child-garden."

Dollie. "Oh, then I hope she will send us soon, very soon.—Oh, Lollie, I've thought of a new dame,—let us p'ay it."

Lollie. "Come along,—what is it?" and Lollie jumped up, scattering all her daisies on the grass.

Dollie, reaching on tiptoe to whisper into her ear, "Why, suppose I be the dardener and you be the f'ower, and I'll water you, eh, wouldn't that be fun?"

Lollie, dancing with delight, "Yes, and then you be the flower, and I be Thomas and water you. Oh! what fun! come along and find the watering-pot."

Hand in hand they trotted off so fast that Dollie fell down, and had to be pulled up and set on her legs again. The small watering-pot was found in the tool-house, and then they went to the pump and filled it, which was a labour of fatigue and time. Dollie was beginning to pour forthwith, but her sister said, "No, not here in the path, flowers don't gwow in paths, they gwow in flower-beds;" so away she trotted, and planted herself, ankle-deep, among the scarlet geraniums, standing up straight and ready for her showerbath. Oh the pretty clean muslin hats, how they collapsed! Oh the nice holland blouses, how they were drenched and

streaked! Oh the breathless little laughs and trembling declarations that "it was so nice," as each in turn stood the shower, shivering in cold delight; and oh! the guilty starts they gave when a horrified voice exclaimed, "Mercy on us! for



goodness sake! Miss Laura and Miss Dorothy, what are you up to now? All your clean hats ruined, not a dry thread on your pinafores, and your shoes and socks all over mud. Oh dear, oh dear, what will missus say! here, come away, and have on some dry clothes, do."

Mrs. Berrie, from the window of her morning room, saw nurse marching across the lawn like an avenger, with a dripping victim in each hand. The victims

hung their heads limply; but as they dragged on her hands, they exchanged half laughing glances behind nurse's broad back, which proved that they thought the fun had been worth the punishment.

"I've a very good mind to take you to your ma just as you are," cried the irate nurse as she hurried to and fro in the nursery, slamming the wardrobes, adding, however, *sotto voce*, "I suppose it wouldn't be much good though, missus only seems to laugh at all their mischief, and I dare say would only tell me I ought to have looked after them, as if I could have my hands busy in one place and my eyes in another."

Very soon the children were dried and re-dressed, and Freddie, coming in from the schoolroom, was taken with them for a walk.

Miss Miller was very thankful to get her youngest pupil out of her dominion as soon as possible, for she found that her only chance of being able to give a quiet lesson to the elders was during his absence. If he was not inciting Elsie to rebellion, or defying the governess himself, he was in such a droll humour that none of the girls could keep a grave countenance.

To-day drollery was his cue; he came out singing and laughing, and nurse had great difficulty to

dress him, for when, after various skirmishes, she brought his hat, he suddenly stood on his head and presented his toes for it, on which Dollie laughed till she rolled on the floor.

Their first errand was to the hair-dresser, where Freddie astonished the man who was cutting his hair with the solemn inquiry, "what was to be done to make his beard grow?"

"Sometimes we sell 'Rossetter's Hair Restorer' to our customers, sir, but they are mostly older than you are."

"What does it cost?" asked Freddie.

"Three shillings a bottle, sir."

Freddie was lost in audible calculation :

"Three times twelve are thirty-two—no, thirty-six—thirty-six pennies! It will take thirty-six weeks to get as much; what an awfully long time. Ah, well, never mind, I expect my beard will be grown of itself by that time; but you may as well show me how I am to shave myself when it is come. I must hold my nose so, mustn't I?"

"Come, Master Freddie, don't you be rude," interposed nurse, just in time to prevent the man from a fit of laughter.

"Where are we going?" asked Lollie as they walked up the street.

"I have to go to the laundress with these hats you young ladies spoiled this morning," said nurse; "perhaps she will let you play a little in her garden."

The way led from the end of the town, and then along the banks of the river Emar. Freddie was delighted to watch the darting fishes, and boast of how easily he would catch them if he only had a hook; but after having once or twice saved him from falling into the water, owing to his stretching his head too far over the bank, nurse bade him take his little sisters' hands, and walk in front of her.

Thus restricted in their actions, their minds became more active, and they fell to talking and wondering, as children do. "Look," cried Dollie, "some of the blue sky has fallen into the water, how will it do to get back to heaven again?"

"That is not sky, it is ref'ection, you silly girl," said Freddy.

"What is ref'ection?" asked Lollie.

"One kind of ref'ection means a jolly breakfast, but I expect this is another kind. Now don't interrupt me any more, I am *learning* a poetry."

"How can you learn without a book?"

"Why, I am learning it out of my own head, like papa does the books he writes."

"Oh! *imposing* you mean," exclaimed Lollie.

Just here Dollie broke in with a shrill little voice, "How p'itty the clouds are, I want one of dem."

"But you can't weach to get it, you know; the clouds are—oh, ever so high, as high as God is," said Lollie, stretching up her hands.

"I'll det a very long, long ladder, as long as the sky," asserted Dollie confidently.

"But the clouds are too soft to hold up a ladder, they will bweak, and then you will fall down frough dead—as dead as can be, Dollie."

The little one would not be convinced, but put her wee foot down more emphatically, saying, "Yes, yes, a long, long ladder, long as de clouds."

"I've done it," cried Freddie, "I've made my poetry, hark :

The sun is light,
The water's bright,
The little fishes swim all round ;
The children cry,
"Oh, they will die,
The little fishes will be drowned."

There, doesn't that sound just like real poetry out of a book ?"

"Exactly!" cried Lollie in great admiration; "but, Freddie, is it *true*? do fishes die in the water? if they did God wouldn't have put them there."

"No; but poetry isn't truth, is it, you silly girl! drowned and round are quite poetry, so it must be right. Now let us come and have a race—jump over this little river, and run away in the field before nurse can catch us."

Away went the six little legs off the path into the water-meadow as fast as possible, with nurse waddling after them as quickly as her portly form allowed. The chase was prolonged by the three children each running in different directions, so that as soon as nurse had caught one, she had to hasten panting after another. It ended in Dollie tumbling over into a mass of long grass, which entrapped her feet, and poor nurse and Freddie rolled together into a ditch, a little wider than the others, which the boy tried to leap.

Quite refreshed by their diversions, the three little Berries were content to return to the path from whence they had strayed, and bear with becoming meekness the rebukes of their guardian. But nurse's troubles were not over, she was rash enough to trust them alone in the garden of the laundress, while she went into the house, and probably took some little time to tell her friend of the distracting sayings and doings of her young charges.

In the garden was a large heap of masons, rubbish, near a bed of tall Jerusalem artichokes. To any ordinary beholder they would have appeared quite uninteresting, but to the Berries' fertile imagination they were immediately transformed into a mountain and a pine forest. They pulled the poles from a bed of scarlet-runners, to make alpenstocks of, and climbed up and down the hillock, and toiled over the bricks and stones, which they called Mont Blanc, with infinite labour and delight.

"I have thought of a jolly game,—Miss Miller was telling us of the dogs of Mont St. Bernard this morning," cried Freddie; "this is not Mont Blanc any longer, it is Mont St. Bernard, and Dollie shall be the traveller lost in the snow, and you be the old monk, and I will be the dog,—shall we?"

"Oh yes, yes," cried both the little girls.

"Come then, Dollie, you must be lost in the snow, here's a nice white place, lie down in it, and I will hide you just as if the snow had snowed upon you all night."

Away clambered Dollie and lay down with her pretty blue frock on the heap of lime and mortar, while the others covered her all over with chalk and other dust.

"There, she's quite lost now, Lollie; we must go

to our convent, and when I bark you will know my instinct tells me there is a man lost on the mountain."

After a certain time the monk in the person of Lollie, dressed in a white sheet taken from the laundresses' bushes, reappeared with a barking dog in a sailor costume, careering madly on hands and feet.

The dog sniffed about the heap, and at length getting on the scent scratched wildly with both hands, till the poor traveller was discovered, and was being dragged down the heap by the dress, in Freddie's strong little teeth, when a voice called, "Now, young ladies, I am ready, it is time to go home."

From afar off nurse descried the Berries, and rushed from the house, followed by her friend the laundress. It was the work of a moment to pull the dog up on his hind legs with a shake, to take the gown off the monk and fling it to its owner, and to set the frozen traveller upright and begin furiously to shake and beat the dust out of her, regardless of the cries.

"Oh, nursie! de dust is dot into my eyes."

"You naughty children, you'll be the death of me. I declare 'tisn't safe to leave them a single minute! There, Mrs. Sopey, you will believe all I tell you another time."

"De dust is in my eyes," wailed Dollie.

"Serve you right, then, for making yourself in such a mess."

"Bless their little hearts, they was only playing, wasn't you, my dears?" said Mrs. Sopey.

"To be sure we were, only nurse isn't a little child and does not know what play is; she calls it all mischief. We were only the good monks and dogs that save the poor lost travellers in the snow."

"And tear your sister's frock with your teeth," retorted nurse; "it will try my eyes to mend it, I can tell you."

"De dust is dot into my eyes," cried Dollie as she was dragged away.

"I wish children had a little thought for their elders," sighed nurse as she walked away.

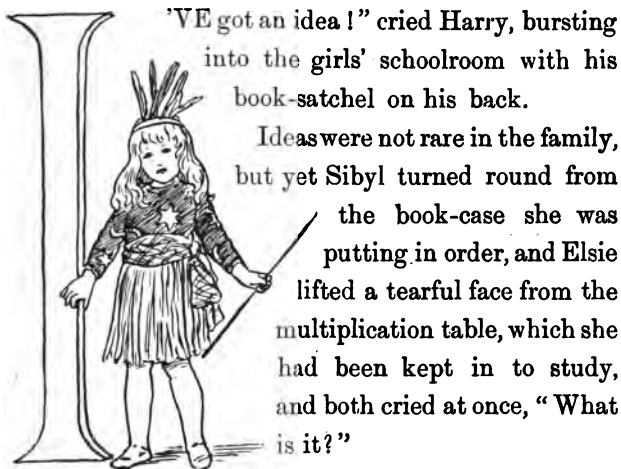
"I wish nurses and governesses could understand play; we did not mean to be naughty, did we, Fweddle?" said Lollie as they followed her.

"Seems to me as if all the best fun is what nurse calls naughty. I wish I knew what sort of fun is *good*," replied her brother.



CHAPTER III.

GARDEN DIVERSIONS.



'VE got an idea!" cried Harry, bursting into the girls' schoolroom with his book-satchel on his back.

Ideas were not rare in the family, but yet Sibyl turned round from the book-case she was putting in order, and Elsie lifted a tearful face from the multiplication table, which she had been kept in to study, and both cried at once, "What is it?"

"There's a jolly large striped shawl in the hall that will make a splendid tent; let us suppose that we are shipwrecked mariners on a desert island, and live in it in the garden."

"First rate!" exclaimed Freddie; "but wouldn't

it be better to be Arabs in the desert, we can wind towels round our heads, you know?"

"Or let us be Red Indians in our wigwam, we can be *squaws*, and Dollie and the dolls our *papooses*," suggested Minna.

"We have too many clothes on for that," replied Harry.

"We might roll up our trousers and sleeves and wear our jerseys," proposed Freddie, his eyes twinkling.

"So you could; and we girls could work suns and moons and things over our drab jerseys to look like tattooing," put in Minna.

"I have a whole lot of red and blue parrot's feathers in my drawer, to make head-dresses with," said Sibyl.

"Capital! jolly!" cried the two boys in a breath. "You will help, won't you, Sibyl?"

"I don't mind tattooing a jersey, but I cannot play with you, I have to practise," she answered.

"What a bore that practising is, whenever we want you for any fun you always make that excuse," exclaimed Harry crossly.

"I believe Sibyl is going to be a grown-up young lady soon, she does not care for play any more," sighed Minna, going off arm in arm with Elsie.

"Well, come, Freddie, you and I will put up the tent before dinner, then it will be all ready for the afternoon. I have a half-holiday, so we can have a good long game."

"But whose shawl is it; must we not ask permission first?" questioned Freddie, as his cousin, having taken that article from a chair in the hall, began to tie strings to its four corners as soon as he reached the lawn.

"Whose is it? Aunt Olive's, of course, whose can it be besides?—here, you hammer these pegs into the ground, you can do it with a large stone, while I go and ask auntie to lend it us."

Away went Harry, and finding his aunt talking to the seamstress in the morning-room, exclaimed, in his bright offhand way:

"Aunt Olive, may we have that old striped shawl of yours to make a tent with, we will not injure it a bit, I promise that."

Mrs. Berrie, having a vague idea of an old shawl which had for years been used as a family hack, and her mind being very much occupied in calculating the number of yards of cashmere required to make dresses for two growing girls, replied:

"Yes, dear; take care of it."

Harry flew back to the garden, shouting, "It is

all right, she says we may," and the tent-making proceeded vigorously.

Two upright sticks were put into the ground, and the shawl tied to them across the middle. The four corners were then pegged down by means of loops of string tied to them, thus making a kind of gable. It was not high enough for Harry to stand upright in, or scarcely to sit, but it was pronounced perfect by both boys.

After the schoolroom dinner the children all disappeared into the shrubbery, and before long the garden presented a very savage appearance. The tent was pitched in rather a conspicuous place, because Harry thought the tree-fern in the middle of the lawn would be a capital imitation of a palm-tree, and give a more foreign look to the arrangements.

In front of the wigwam were two masculine Indians, whose bare arms and legs, as well as their faces, were very much tattooed with black crayon. They had red scarfs round their waists and feathered crowns on their heads, the hair of which was as much frizzed as possible. One brandished the gardener's sickle, which he called a bowie-knife, and the other had a long lance of ashwood.

Just under the wigwam sat two squaws nursing



"The other had a long lance of ashwood."

their *papooses*. These, you must know, are the West Indian names for wives and babies. The drab jerseys, with the mystic devices embroidered on them, had a peculiarly savage aspect, as had their long hair, very loose and rough, and much combed over their painted faces; and waist-belts with long fringes of coloured strips of paper were also very useful in making them look quite unlike civilized little girls on an English lawn. Two live children rolled over each other on the grass, and crawled in and out of the tent in great delight, while a third *papoose* was tied into a basket, ready to be strapped on the back of one of the mothers. It neither cried nor laughed, but showed very stolid features and a cracked nose; indeed it was neither more nor less than Lollie's naughty doll Sarah, lent for the occasion.

"What shall we do next?" asked Minna; "I am tired of nursing this baby any longer."

"Suppose we offer her up to the great serpent!" proposed Harry.

"Is that an Indian god?" asked Elsie.

"I know it is an African one, because I was reading of it yesterday in 'Stanley's Travels,'" replied Harry, "and I suppose all savages are very much alike."

"But where is the gwate serpent?" asked Lollie.

"It ought to hang on the tree above the *kraal*," said Harry, "that's how they are at Fernando Po." It is well that Master Harry's companions were not clever enough in geography to be critical on his giving the superstitions of African negroes to American Indians.

"I know a serpent!" cried Freddie, and off he dashed into the nursery, returning with a long-jointed wooden snake, which was forthwith hung on a tree near the tent. "Now let us howl, because the conjuring man tells us the great serpent wants a sacrifice."

A chorus of shrieks and wails awoke the echoes in a most appalling way.

"I wont have my *papoose* sacrificed!" sobbed Elsie, holding Dollie close to her.

"Nor I mine," wailed Minna, slinging the doll's basket on her back.

"The great serpent demands it!" quoth Harry solemnly, pointing to the snake and brandishing his bowie-knife. "Come, Minna, give us the doll, it can't feel, you know."

"No, it's my doll!" cried Lollie, forgetting that she was an Indian child.

"Oh, she's only an old thing,—you know you

are always knocking her about yourself," said Freddie.

"Listen, Lollie, we will subscribe our weekly money and buy you a new one," interposed Harry, patting her back.

"But she won't be Sarah?" sobbed Lollie.

"Oh, *I say*, if you girls begin to cry, there is no fun in playing, we can't be savages without sacrifices and war-dances, and as we can't sacrifice ourselves, we may as well get some fun out of the dolls; we will make a bonfire, and pretend the great serpent is Moloch," cried Harry, mixing East and West Indian and African religions all together in a most confusing manner.

Sarah was doomed by general consent, the fun of a bonfire being judged by all to be quite worth a doll. Lollie dried her tears, saying, "If my new doll is pwetty, I will make her a weally good girl."

"I'm glad my Ebelina isn't here to be scac'ified too," sighed Dollie.

"Most tribes only sacrifice prisoners of war, not their own children," mused Harry; "suppose we part into two tribes and make war on each other, and take prisoners."

"All right; we will go into ambush behind the two cedar clumps on each side of the gate, and

rush out suddenly on each other," replied Freddie, marching off with Minna and Lollie to the other side of the garden.

Now, if any of them had chanced to look out of the gate, they would have seen five figures walking very quietly along the dusty road from the town. There was Mrs. Primrose, the most precise of ladies, dressed in the most approved Parisian style, with long gloves and a white lace parasol, and two little Misses Primrose, one on each side of her, dressed also in Parisian style, with white boots and blue sashes, with feathered hats and tiny parasols. With them was the Rector, who had just met them, and a white-capped French *bonne* behind.

Mrs. Primrose had only lately taken a house in the parish, and this was her first call on Mrs. Berrie.

"I ventured to bring the children with me, as I hear Mrs. Berrie has some young people," she said to the Rector.

"Yes, there are plenty of little Berries, between the two families, and they are always together. You cannot do better than let your little girls make their acquaintance, they are a set of bright intelligent children, and great favourites of mine."

"Are they? Then they must be well brought up. I am pleased to hear that, for I have very strong opinions about training children, and a horror of spoilt ones."

"So has Mrs. Berrie," said the Rector, his eyes twinkling, "her theory is non-repression,—she has studied Herbert Spencer a good deal,—it seems to answer very well, the children are certainly lively and original."

Mrs. Primrose's face began to take a doubtful expression, as if she hardly agreed with the Rector, when a series of howls met her ear.

"Good heavens! what is that, is some one being ill used?"

"It is probably only the children playing, they have perhaps got hold of a new idea."

"I—I fear they are rather wild; will they do my girls harm?"

"A little free perhaps, but a set of very well-principled children. Ah! here is the gate. Good-bye, Mrs. Primrose, I am going further on this road."

After polite adieux, Mrs. Primrose opened the gate, and was calmly proceeding up the broad walk to the house, when whoop! halloo! three savage Indians with spears charged her on one side, and three on the other, led by a bare-armed boy,

brandishing a sickle. Utter confusion ensued. Miss Amelia Primrose rolled over on the gravel with Dollie, who had rushed blindly upon her, and Miss Bella Primrose had her parasol broken by a blow from a spear. The astonished lady lifted the black face of Freddie from the folds of her light silk costume, on which the tattooing had left alarming marks, and stood looking sternly and horror-struck at the group of savages, who were as astonished as herself.

"A little free, but well brought up," she ejaculated; "there is a great deal too much freedom for me."

The Red Indians began to show their civilization through their disguise, for Harry, pulling off his feather cap instead of a hat, exclaimed:

"I am sure we beg a thousand pardons: we are Red Indians, and my tribe was making war on Freddie's from behind an ambush, so we did not see you coming."

Mrs. Primrose was beginning to relax in spite of her disapproval, when her eye happened to rest on the tent, and she recognized her own shawl, which she had lent Mrs. Berrie the day before, to come home in the rain from a call at her house. This was decidedly too free, and could not be endured. Mrs. Primrose felt she was not in a mood to be

polite to the mother of such a family, and turning away, muttered :

"Give my compliments to your mother, I will call another day."

"Oh, please do not go away, we are really sorry. Oh, here is mamie!" exclaimed Elsie in relief.

Mrs. Berrie noticing the sudden cessation of noise, had come out to see what was wrong; her eye took in the whole affair, and the humour of it, as she came smiling brightly down the garden to welcome her visitors.

"My dears!" she said, after shaking hands, "I fear you have alarmed Mrs. Primrose. Why! what have you been doing to yourselves?"

"Oh, mamie, we were having such a splendid game, we are Indians, and were making war on Harry's tribe, and instead, we charged the lady," laughed Freddie, while the two groups of girls, savage and stylish, stood regarding each other curiously.

"Well," said Mrs. Berrie, "next time you choose a new game, let me inspect the costumes, these are not suited to a game in a modern garden; now go and tell nurse to make you neat, and come to amuse these little girls."

"Oh, pray do not trouble them, we cannot stay," said Mrs. Primrose. "I thought, as we have Therèse with us, she could take my shawl, and save your having to send it, but I see it is in use," this last with a very severe glance at the tent.

Mrs. Berrie began to say quite calmly :

"In use! oh, no, I put it in the hall ready to send you when nurse went out;" but then her eyes, too, resting on the tent, she saw to her dismay that its sloping roof was indeed made of Mrs. Primrose's striped shawl, and with a flush she began to apologize, and went to take it off.

"Pray do not say anything," said Mrs. Primrose, "of course you could not have known the children had taken it; but I generally make it a rule that my girls shall not take anything without permission."

"My children always ask me first; the fault was mine, I thought they spoke of my old striped shawl, which they are accustomed to play with," pleaded Mrs. Berrie, releasing the last corner from its knots. "Fortunately it is not injured, and as the mistake was entirely mine, you must come in and have a cup of tea to show you forgive me."

Mrs. Berrie looked so bright and pleasant, that Mrs. Primrose could no longer keep her look of displeasure, and followed her into the pleasant cool

drawing-room, where ferns waved in the window, and where Sibyl was diligently practising Cramer.

She rose and came forward to be introduced to the little visitors with such easy grace that Mrs. Primrose was quite struck, and she thought:

“Well, there are some that are not quite savage.”

Her ideas were still more changed a little later, when two neat little girls, looking very artistic in embroidered holland blouses, their flowing hair nicely waved over their shoulders, came in, followed by two bright boys with fresh fair complexions.

“Are these also your children, Mrs. Berrie? I did not know you had so many.”

“These are the ones you have seen already,” laughed Mrs. Berrie, “only they were Indians before, and now they are themselves. Elsie, dear, ring the bell for tea.”

When the tray was brought in, the boys made themselves useful in carrying the cups, Harry rushed forward to save his aunt the trouble of moving a chair, the girls helped their visitors to cake and biscuits, and the whole family looked so well-bred, that Mrs. Primrose gave her consent at once, when Elsie proposed to show Amelia and Bella the nursery and their toys. She repented of her rashness, however, when Harry and Freddie, having tumbled over

each other in their eagerness to pick up the tea-cosy for Mrs. Berrie, next vaulted over a satin-covered chair to hurry after the girls.

“I wish I had not let them go, who knows in what state their white frocks will be, left alone with such children as those!” thought Mrs. Primrose.





CHAPTER IV.

DOING THE HONOURS OF THE NURSERY.



"OH, what a large pleasant room," said Bella Primrose, as the five girls entered the nursery.

"You can see all the garden and the road; our nursery only looks on the back-yard, and all the smell of the dinner and the washing comes up."

"Ours is the best room on this floor, better even than mamie's bedroom; she gave it up to us because she says we have to live in it, and that children want as much air and sunshine as the flowers do," replied Sibyl.

"Mother says it is not right to give up to children in anything," said Amelia Primrose, half-wistfully. "Oh, there's a beautiful doll's house! are you allowed to play with it every day?"

"Of course we are, what else is a house for?"

cried Minna; "don't you live in your house every day, then why should not dolls do the same?"

"Ah, but ours is very handsome indeed," said Bella; "it has silk curtains and inlaid furniture in the drawing-room, and the dolls were dressed in Paris, so if we played with them every day they would soon be spoiled, mother says, so we only have it opened as a great treat."

"I shouldn't like that at all," replied Elsie, "it is not like life."

"Dis is my Ebelina," said little Dollie, holding up her favourite doll to view, "and dat," pointing to another, "is Lollie's Sarah, what was going to be scac'ified, on'y she wasn't."

"Oh, what a shabby doll!" cried Bella, glancing in scorn on Sarah's shiny, colourless face, her flaxen hair rough with much childish hair-dressing, and her much-creased dress. "You should see our best dolls at home, a lady brought them from London, and mother says they must have cost a great deal. They have satin dresses with flounces, and real earrings and a real watch and chain. I mean it *looks* like real, and you can turn the hands round, but it is such a dear little tiny watch."

"Then they had each a box of clothes," added Amelia, "with night-gowns trimmed with real lace,

and silk stockings and satin hats; but, of course, we can't play with them every day, or they would soon get spoiled."

"What! don't you undress them at night and put them to bed?" asked Elsie.

"And arn't they ever naughty and have to be punished?" inquired Lollie.

"And don't you dive them sudar-p'ums to eat when dey are dood?" said Dollie.

"No, they stay in the glass cupboard in the nursery, so that we can look at them when we like."

"Oh, we don't do like that," laughed Sibyl; "come and see all our things;" so she led them to the night-nursery, where every child's bed had a doll's cradle or bedstead beside it; then to the doll's wardrobe, where all the tiny clothes, well-worn and mostly home-made, were kept.

"Don't take them into my room, Sibyl," cried Elsie very seriously, "there is infection there."

"Infection of what?" exclaimed the visitors, pulling aside their white skirts.

"My doll has the scarlet fever, and has not been up for three days," replied Elsie gravely; "none of the others are allowed to see her."

As it would be cruel to neglect to dress the dolls

when well, a pretence of illness was often used to save trouble.

Bella laughed. "What queer children you are; you talk as if the dolls were real!"

"So dey are; Ebelina is my little dirl, and I am her mudder," asserted Dollie.

Just then the boys came bursting in. "I say, girls, what shall we do? let us play something. Let's have a circus, I'll be the clown and paint my face," cried Freddie, turning somersets on his hands. "What can you do?" he asked the visitors, "can you stand on your head?"

"I should think not, indeed," laughed Amelia, "that isn't a thing for girls to do."

"Oh yes it is, Lollie and Elsie can both do it, and Minna can walk on her hands."

"We have left off doing those things now," said the two elder mentioned girls, blushing.

"It's very easy," said Lollie, "look at me," and she performed the feat very cleverly. "Now you twy."

"No, thank you, it would spoil my hat," said Bella.

"Take it off then."

"But I should roll on the floor and make my frock dirty, and then what would mother say," replied Bella.

"These are new frocks, they came from London on purpose for us; do you admire them?" asked Amelia, turning herself round and looking over her shoulder at the large blue bow at the back.

"They are very pretty," replied Sibyl, hanging her head on one side to judge the better, "but it seems to me that they are *too* pretty."

"Why, how can that be?" exclaimed the sisters.

"If the frocks won't let you do anything amusing, they must be your masters, and I should not like to be a servant to my clothes."

"Servant, indeed, what do you mean?" cried Bella, flushing angrily and quite missing the moral of Sibyl's remark. Her anger was heightened by Lollie, who was very quick at learning the rhymes nurse taught her, walking round and repeating very emphatically:

"How proud we are, how fond to show
Our clothes and call them rich and new;
When the poor sheep and silk-worms wore
This very clothing long before."

"Well! that is more insolent than ever, to call our new frocks secondhand. Mamma said she feared you were rather rude children."

"So we are," exclaimed Sibyl, very repentant; "it all began with my remark. I am so stupid that

when I begin to reason about things I quite forget whether it sounds polite or not. Lollie, you must tell Miss Primrose you did not mean that verse for her."

"It is only a rhyme old nurse taught her," added Elsie.

But Lollie had thought her quotation very suitable, and could not be brought to apologize. However, her elder sisters did it for her so well, that before long the girls were all busy playing with the doll's-house, and the Primroses found themselves learning a great many new ideas of play, and the realities of "make believe."

The boys finding this dull, betook themselves to the garden, where Harry gave Mrs. Primrose's delicate nerves a great shock by dropping down from a swinging branch of a tree over the entrance gate, and opening the gate for her from above, hanging monkey fashion on the branch.

"Good heavens, boys! you will fall and break your necks; does your mother know you do such dangerous things?"

"Don't be afraid, Mrs. Primrose," said Harry, his merry eyes sparkling amid the branches, "we are at home in the trees," and he suddenly swung himself off, and dropped from a great height at her feet, lifting his hat to bid adieu as soon as he reached the ground.

"What terrifying children!" exclaimed Mrs. Primrose as she walked up the road.

"Oh! but, mother, they do know how to play so well," cried Bella. "They want us to spend a day with them soon, and you are to put us on some washing-frocks they said, so that we need not be afraid of spoiling them."

"It will be necessary, I think," replied Mrs. Primrose grimly, adding to herself, "Non-repression is a doubtful system of education."





CHAPTER V.

FREDDIE AN IMP.



FREDDIE woke up one morning feeling very cross, and the first words he said as he yawned and stretched himself in bed were:

“Oh dear! oh dear! I can’t always be good, I shall have to be naughty to-day.”

And truly, when Freddie was dressed, nurse declared that he was a very naughty boy indeed, for first he would not go into his bath, and when he was in he would not come out, though he shivered like a leaf in the wind. Being cold made him more cross, and

when nurse began to scold he called her a "nasty cross old thing," and shook his head so that she could not brush his hair; and no sooner had she done it, after a great deal of patience, than he ruffled it all up with his two hands, till nurse cried out:

"Be quiet, Master Freddie, I declare your head looks just like a mop, after all my trouble too." On which he made a grimace, and went to breakfast just as he was.

It was only the fear of offending his father that kept him tolerably quiet at the breakfast-table. I think his mother knew quite well how Freddie was feeling, and that this was a day when he was an imp and no angel, for she looked very sorrowful when she saw him pouting and refusing to answer his sisters, who proposed a game in the garden before lessons. He followed them, however, and spoiled every game they began, till at length they drove him away, Elsie crying with vexation, and calling him a "very disagreeable boy."

"You are all cross,—everybody is out of temper to-day, especially Elsie," cried Freddie angrily.

At that moment the voice of Miss Miller called them to the schoolroom, and as soon as she looked at Freddie's face her heart sank, for she knew she had a trying morning before her.

Nothing went well,—Freddie scribbled on Elsie's new copy-book and made her cry, and when once her tears were let loose they became a flood that hindered her from doing anything. It was in vain for Miss Miller to bid her say her lesson, when the tears had washed away all memory of it, and her sobs prevented her forming a word with her voice. As for reading, she could not see a letter, and if she wrote, the tears blotted the shaky letters on her book. So the teacher gave her up, and turned to Minna; but Freddie had by this time dipped his cousin's thimble in the ink, and pretended to drink it, blackening his lips and spilling it on Minna's copy, and then they began squabbling over the blotting-paper. In despair Miss Miller appealed to Sibyl to help Minna, while she called Master Freddie to her, knowing that the time for battle was come. I don't know whether Freddie made up his mind beforehand on what point he would resist Miss Miller, or whether certain words or figures became little imps, tempting him to be naughty. This morning the figure 5 seemed to be his tempter; nothing would make him say or write that number. He was doing subtraction of money.

"Six from eleven pence," said Miss Miller, "how many remain?"

"Four," replied Freddie.

"Think again."

"Six," hazarded Freddie.

After several wrong guesses the teacher told him :

"It is five,—now write five."

Freddie held the pencil in his chubby hand, and seemed to take great pains ; but the figure 5 never appeared on the slate. After writing every other number, he declared those were all the numbers he knew.

"What is this?" asked Miss Miller, writing a five.

He turned it upside down, and pronounced it, "a nine with a tail," which was very impertinent of him.

"No, you are wrong. What is it?" asked his governess again.

"A three turned the wrong way before," said Freddie.

By this time Miss Miller knew she was in for a very hard battle indeed.

"If you do not tell me that number in five minutes, you shall not have any fruit for dinner to-day!" she said, and turned to correct Sibyl's German exercise.

At the end of five minutes—which that naughty Freddie had spent in drawing caricatures of his governess on his slate—she returned to the charge, but with the same result.

“I give you one minute more; if you do not tell me then, I shall take you to your mother. I know you are always sorry to grieve her,” said Miss Miller.

The next minute the perplexed governess was dragging by the hand a screaming boy, who in his passion yet managed to pull Elsie’s hair, and set her crying again, to shake Minna’s arm and blot her sum, and to kick so violently that Miss Miller suffered greatly from bruises for some days.

The mother was very sorry, but not surprised to see her boy’s temper; and when Miss Miller said:

“I am grieved to trouble you, Mrs. Berrie, but this little boy is so very naughty and insubordinate to-day, that I am obliged to bring him to you,” all she replied was a calm sorrowful:

“Thank you, Miss Miller; I will punish him.”

As soon as they were alone, Mrs. Berrie said very seriously:

“Freddie, even if you were repentant, I could not let you go back to Miss Miller this morning, because it is not fair to all the others to disturb

their lessons by having a naughty boy in the room, and I cannot let you play, because play is only for good and happy children, and I am sure you have been very unhappy all day; so you must be put into a room alone, till you can be with others without spoiling their pleasure."

She rose and opened the door of a wardrobe-room, which was full of locked presses, but contained no one thing amusing to children.

The sight of this room seemed to redouble Freddie's passion; he screamed and kicked, and at last had to be carried in and laid on the ground, where he made a great deal of noise.

After some time the noises ceased, and his mother looked in, asking,

"Are you good now?"

There was Master Freddie, sitting in a corner on the ground with his arms folded on his chest.

"No," he said; "I will stay a little longer."

Again the door was locked. After about half an hour his mother heard him dancing round the room, and chanting:

"Five times one are five. Four and one are five. Three and two are five. Six from eleven are five. Five is five."

Quite rejoiced, Mrs. Berrie went to call Miss

Miller; and when she came, opened the door triumphantly, saying:

"Now, Miss Miller, you will find Freddie quite good."

"Freddie, can you tell me how many remain if you take six pence from eleven?" asked the governess.

I do not know how it happened, but Miss Miller's severe voice and look seemed to turn Freddie's heart all naughty again. If his mamma had opened her arms, he would have flown into them and cried and repented, but now the stubborn look came over his pretty little round face, the eyebrows came down over his blue eyes, and the lips of his wavy mouth went out into an ugly pout; he thrust his hands into the pockets of his sailor-suit, and said insolently:

"I am not going to tell you." Then turning to his mother, he said, "You can lock the door again, I'm not good yet."

With a sigh she closed the door very softly; but Miss Miller went out with an angry rustle, saying:

"I feared Freddie could not be good again so soon."

A little while after, Mrs. Berrie, who was too anxious to go far away from her boy, heard a little voice from the wardrobe-room calling,

"Mamie, are you there?"

"Yes, my boy."

"Do you know there is a poor fowl in here who can't get out?" and a great deal of flutter was heard, and a voice crying, "Cock-a-doodle-doo."

"Is it a good little fowl?" asked the mother.

"Yes, a very good one; he was only naughty for fun."

Mrs. Berrie, always glad of any chance to take a child out of disgrace, opened the door, and out fluttered Freddie, crowing and waving his arms like wings.

"Stop, Freddie, you know if you are really good you must go to Miss Miller and finish your sum."

"Oh, school is over now! I hear the girls. Miss Miller is going home. I'll do it to-morrow;" and away rushed Master Fred, leaving his mother with that sense of not being equal to the occasion, which always troubled her after her failures in ruling that imp. She was so afraid that she had not done her duty, that she went to her husband's study to ask his advice.

"Do anything except give in to him," said Mr. Berrie.

"You mean I must make him do that sum with Miss Miller?"

"Certainly."

Mrs. Berrie sighed, and went off to call her son; but Miss Miller met her on the way, and asked leave to go home at once, as she was engaged to lunch with a

friend, and Mrs. Berrie was not sorry for her to go; but she knew that the struggle with Freddie was only put off, and that her little boy was yet to be vanquished.

"How nice to have only mamie at the school-room dinner," exclaimed the children as they took their places.

"Yes, both papa and Miss Miller are out to lunch, so my children must make dinner very pleasant to me by being good."

A general rush ensued, half-a-dozen pairs of arms meeting in an embrace round the mother's neck.

A great deal of lively child talk went on, Freddie being the merriest of the party. When the dessert came on, Minna reminded him that Miss Miller had forbidden him to have any fruit that day,—the loss of dessert being one of the family punishments.

"You need not remind me, I remember it quite well," said Freddie loftily.

His own loss did not prevent his showing the greatest interest in what the others had.

"What are you going to take, Elsie—currants? If I were you I should have gooseberries; that is because I like myself, you see.—I am gooseberry."

"Now then, Elderberry," he said to Sibyl, who was helping herself to a plum, "that is not the best plum on the dish. Here, let me choose one for you.

There, this is a beauty, ripe and juicy!" and then he watched her eat it, as though he were enjoying the pleasure himself.

Mrs. Berrie watched it all, feeling amused, but at the same time that helpless feeling came over her that Freddie was carrying all before him in spite of punishments. Her thoughts were recalled by hearing Dollie's voice saying:

"Now I'll tell you a 'tory."

Dollie had been sitting very quietly in her high chair, but having finished her dinner, began to think it was time to amuse herself.

"Dere was once a little dirl about as big as this Dollie," pointing to herself, "and she had a chair like mine; but she did not know how to behave at dinner. She eat her meat without a 'poon, and put her fingers into her plate, like this, and blewed into her dlass, like this," said Dollie, performing all those ill-mannered actions; "and then she st'etched out her hands and snatched at eberything, like *this*, and like *that*;" here Dollie snatched at the gooseberries and put them in her mouth.

By this time all the others were in fits of laughter, and Mrs. Berrie began to think Dollie's story was only an excuse for mischief; but the laughter had excited the child, and she went on merrily:

"Den dis naughty dirl wanted all the meat, and sudar, and fruit, and when her mudder said no, she streamd lite this, *ah—h!* (a prolonged shriek). At last she shooked her high chair, lite this, and it tumbled down, and the table-cloth tumbled down, and the dooseberries tumbled down, and the salt all went into her hair. Oh, how funny it was!" cried Dollie, clasping her little hands and laughing so much that if her mother had not caught her, she would have acted this scene of her story as well as the previous ones, for her chair had almost fallen.

"Yes," cried Lollie, laughing too; "and all the vinegar went into her eyes, didn't it, Dollie?"

"Yes, and the pepper tickled her tongue," said Freddie. "Well done, Dollie, that's a capital story!"

It must not be thought because Freddie was merry, that he was less of an imp than before. His obstinacy for this day was only about the figure 5, and solely directed against Miss Miller. He did not want to vex his mother, and so he was quite good with her; but as soon as Miss Miller came home, and Mr. Berrie told her he wished Freddie to do the sum he had refused in the morning, then all the obstinacy came on again. He went on quite well till he got to that dreadful five, when the same battle was fought over again.

Mr. Berrie, who had remained to keep up the governess's authority, said :

"Now, Freddie, unless you obey Miss Miller, I shall send you to a boy's school, where the masters will know how to manage you."

This threat only redoubled Freddie's obstinacy, and a dreadful scene ensued, which ended in Mr. Berrie chastising him with his own hand, and then going away very sorrowful to shut himself up in his study.

At bed-time his mother went to Freddie as usual, to hear his prayers. She found him crying, but he refused either to say his prayers, or to go to bed without saying them, because he was sure he could not sleep if he did.

"Then say them, dear," said his mother.

"What use is it, when I feel so naughty?"

"To ask God to make you better, darling."

"Oh! but I am sure He won't do it while I feel like this. I am not a bit sorry for teasing Miss Miller."

"Try it and see, because God has promised to make us good, if we ask Him."

"How long do you think He would be in making me good?" said Freddie, speculatively.

"Oh, perhaps the feeling would come now, or you might have to wait a little first."

"Well, I'll try," sighed Freddie, and after many struggles he said his prayers; then getting up with the same sullen face, he added in despair, "There! you see I have done it, and I don't feel a bit better. I *knew* God would not listen to such a naughty boy."

"Go to bed now," replied his mother sadly, "and when you begin to feel sorry, you will know that the answer is coming to your prayers."

Freddie turned slowly and walked away, with his head held down.

About five minutes afterwards a little figure in a white night-gown burst open the door, and bounding into Mrs. Berrie's arms, Freddie cried:

"I won't do it any more, mamie dear. I am sorry now,—wipe my tears."

"You see, God did hear you," said mamie, comforting him.

"Yes, and rather soon too. I had not long to wait, had I?" he whispered confidently, as he embraced her.

"Will you do your sum with Miss Miller now?"

Freddie gave a kind of shudder, and then said bravely:

"Yes, and with papa too."

Wrapped in a dressing-gown, Freddie went downstairs, where his father was reading the paper in the

drawing-room, and Miss Miller teaching Sibyl some artistic needle-work. The sum was done without a mistake, the boy was kissed and forgiven, and the mother went off to tuck him up happily in bed. As she bent over him she asked :

“Now tell me, Freddie, what has made you so naughty to-day?”

He hid his face half under the clothes, and said :

“I don’t want a woman to teach me any longer. I want to go to school with Harry, and be a real English schoolboy, and so I began to tease Miss Miller on purpose ; and—and when I wanted to leave off teasing her, something inside of me, here,” said Freddie, touching his chest, “wouldn’t let me be good, and so I could not help going on being naughty.”

“Well,” said his mother, “if we let you have your wish, and send you to a boy’s school, it will not be to please you, for I believe you will find it much harder than you expect ; it will only be that we do not think it right to let Miss Miller be troubled by a naughty boy any more. I want you to think of this next time you feel inclined to be obstinate, that no one can be naughty for themselves alone, and that you have made many people sorry to-day. There are your father, myself, Miss Miller, and all the little sisters whom you made cry ; and then, Freddie,

there is some one else who is made sorry too,—who is it?”

Freddie began to cry bitterly, for all the harshness had gone out of his heart, and he felt how wrong he had been. He put his arms round his mother's neck, and sobbed,

“I know, mamie. Will you say your prayers to God to make me good, perhaps a little boy's prayers are not quite enough? and then I was such a naughty boy; but now that wicked part of me is all gone away, I don't think it will come back ever any more,” and the little boy's eyes beamed quite hopefully.

Relieved that Freddie the imp was gone, and Freddie the angel returned again, Mrs. Berrie gave her boy a last kiss, and went down-stairs with a light heart,





CHAPTER VI.

IN A BOYS' SCHOOL.



"WELL, Freddie," said Mr. Berrie, "I am going to give you your wish, and send you to the Grammar School with your cousins."

"Oh, how jolly!" cried Freddie, beginning a war-dance of delight.

"I do not think you will find it so, my boy," said his father: the boy did not stay to hear any ominous remarks, but rushed off to tell Hubert the news.

Hubert was not much more encouraging than his uncle, and said grimly:

"I hope you will like it, old fellow, but I doubt it; the Dominie is pretty sharp, and comes down

hard on a fellow for nothing sometimes; but I say, Freddie, I'll give you one warning,—whatever happens, don't let the boys see you cry, or you will have a hornets' nest about your ears."

"All right," replied Freddie, strutting about very manfully with his hands in his pockets, and feeling as if he were eighteen years old instead of eight.

"I hope you remember the Latin I taught you," said Harry, with a very mischievous twinkle in his eye.

"I remember," replied Freddie, nodding his head solemnly.

"You haven't been teaching him any nonsense I trust, Hal," said Hubert, seriously. Harry only laughed and ran away.

It was already late when the boys arrived at school; roll call was just over, and the classes were forming. Freddie thought he never heard such a noise, or saw so many boys rushing in all directions. Hubert pulled him through the crowd to the master's desk, and announced him as:

"My little cousin, sir."

Mr. Betham looked at him through a pair of very large spectacles, and Freddie fearlessly held out his little hand, saying in a high voice:

"Good morning, Mr. Dominie, I have come to your school."

If you could only have seen the master's eyes blaze behind the spectacles! it was just like firelight through a window-pane at night.

"Who taught you to be impudent? you have need of coming to my school, indeed," he exclaimed.

Freddie, who had always heard his cousins call their master "Dominie," thought that was his real name, and so he stood staring at him with his blue eyes wide open, saying:

"I don't understand you, Mr. Dominie."

Here the master came down on the desk with his cane, making noise enough to silence all the school; then he said in a terrible voice:

"My name is Betham."

"Jolly appropriate too," muttered a boy standing near.

"And if you don't want a good caning, you had better take care to call me by it."

Freddie turned round with an appeal to Hubert; but as soon as the introduction was over, he had gone at once to his class. So Freddie stood staring in a frightened manner at the master.

"Well, boy, why don't you go to your place?"

"If you please, sir, I have not got a place. I'm a new boy."

"We will soon show it you, and teach you to keep

it too. Here, Rawlins," said the master to a tall boy, "take this pupil to the lower-fourth form, and tell Mr. Grinling not to let him be insolent."

Poor Freddie followed Rawlins with a very subdued manner, and thought a boys' school was not quite so jolly as he expected. He felt he had made a bad impression, but could not tell how. His troubles were not over, however. Mr. Grinling was giving a lesson in English History to a class of boys between nine and twelve years of age, and Freddie was set to read with them. The chapter was in the reign of Henry V., and spoke of the doings of that king while he was Madcap Prince Harry, who was one of Freddie's favourite characters.

After the reading the master began to question, and asked the boys:

"What was the character of the Prince of Wales?"

"He was an awfully wild sort of fellow, and the best king that ever was," replied the head boy mixing up the two ends of the story in a curious manner.

"Rather contradictory," replied the master, "but true in the main, if you allow time for the change from the boy to the man. Now tell me something about him when he was young."

This question passed all down the class till it got to Freddie—the master's eyes were just returning to the head boy again, thinking he was too young to know much about it—when he called out:

"I can tell you, sir. I know all about Madcap Prince Harry. One of his friends had got in a row about making a noise in the streets, and a solemn old judge called Gas something—"

"Gascoyne," prompted Mr. Grinling.

"Yes, Gascoyne, condemned him just as he would any other common man. So as he was a friend of his, Madcap Harry got into an awful rage, and up with his fist like this, knocked the judge down in a minute;" here Freddie, who had got into the spirit of the story, and forgot he was at school, gave such a blow on the table that the books danced again. "When he saw the poor old judge floored, he thought he had gone too far, so he helped him up, and put him on a higher bench than before, and begged his pardon."

By this time all the class were in fits of suppressed laughter. One boy whispered to another:

"New boy is a cheeky little fellow, isn't he?" and the other replied as softly:

"No end of a queer chap."

But while the boys' faces were growing merrier, the master's was becoming longer and graver; the corners of his mouth twitched as if they could laugh, if his eyes would let them, but the black eyebrows came down over his eyes till they looked very stern indeed.

"You are not long in giving a specimen of the insolence I was warned to expect from you. Let me tell you that history is not a jest, nor is school the place for jesting."

"I was only telling the story you asked for," replied Freddie, looking very much puzzled as to how he could have offended.

The next lesson was Latin, of which Freddie had only just begun the rudiments with Miss Miller; and when he found he was expected to conjugate verbs he got a little alarmed. As it happened, the verb was *amare*, and he thought, "That is lucky, that is just the one Harry taught me." So he began quite confidently a comic rhyme beginning:

"*Amo, amas, amat,*" thinking he was saying quite the right thing.

"What! more insolence?" cried Mr. Grinling. "Follow me this moment to the head-master, we must take your case in hand very sharply; it is aston-

ishing in one so young. No wonder your parents sent you to school."

Freddie was in despair; did schoolmasters call everything insolence? was there a new language to be learned in talking to them? Very much puzzled he followed Mr. Grinling into the large schoolroom, where he was taken up to judgment before the awful spectacles of Mr. Betham, who, when he had heard the accusations, sentenced the new boy to the ferule, and ordered Freddie to hold out his hand. He held the back of it to his master, for how should he know which side was best adapted to caning, and even that was put down as insolence.

The tears were coming into the little fellow's eyes, and he was winking very hard to keep them back, his hand was tremblingly awaiting the blow from the uplifted cane, when Harry rushed forward from a distant desk, and cried,

"Please, sir, don't cane him, I taught him the doggrel Latin for fun. I did not think he would take it as real; but he does not know any Latin."

The master turned a very angry face on Harry, who required all his courage to face it.

"Perhaps you also taught him to call me Dominie?"

"I may have done so," murmured Harry; but at

this another champion came forward, and Hubert, standing at his brother's side, said boldly :

"No, sir, that was I; my cousin must have thought it your right name."

"Hold out your hands, both of you;" and the two brotherly palms were extended unflinchingly.

Poor Freddie's lips quivered, and he looked imploringly at the master; but the punishment was given. Harry flushed red all over his face, but he made no sound; then Freddie held out his hand, saying :

"Please cane me too, sir, because I got them into the mess, and am very sorry for it."

"Next time, my boy; at present your fault seems to be too much innocence, which we must cure."

The three boys went back to their places Freddie clinging penitently to Hubert's reddened hand.

So passed a little boy's first experience of school; but this was not the most trying part of his day; it was worse in the play-ground, when all the boys crowded round him, and teased him unmercifully about "cheeking the masters." Then a big fellow told him that every new boy had to fight, on which Freddie, who had practised sparring at home with

Harry, squared up his fist, and dancing up to the big boy, asked :

" Very well, who must I fight, you ? "

The tall boy drew back, exclaiming, " No, you little monkey, hit one of your own size. Here, Tom Ball, come and pitch into this new fellow and take a little of the conceit out of him, will you ? "

So Tom Ball flung off his coat and set to work ; but Freddie was so determined not to be beaten that he fought till his eyes were swollen, but would not give in. Then Hubert came between the combatants, and said :

" Now, Tom Ball, that's enough ; you see he does not refuse to fight. You've won, shake hands and that will do."

Tom Ball was not sorry to end, and held out his hand to Freddie ; the elder boys slowly broke the ring and walked away, muttering, " He's a plucky little fellow, he will do ; " and Hubert took the poor little champion off to the lavatory to sponge his face.

" Shall I have to do all this every day ? " asked Freddie ; " if so, I don't like school at all."

" Oh no, once is enough ; they will let you alone after this. I hope Aunt Olive will not blame me ; but if I had stopped your fighting, they would have called you a coward, and teased you all the time.

You might have given in before though, old fellow, this bruise only came in the last round; does it hurt?"

"A—a little," half sobbed Freddie as his cousin sponged it. "I—I don't mind it much, it's—it's rather—jolly—fighting."

It was a forlorn face that tried to look up manfully while saying this.

"You need not do it again, I don't believe there is any one else small enough to stand up with you except Tommy, and he has had enough to-day. Keep up your spirits, Fred, you did not show bad pluck."

"Well, Freddie," said his father, with a glance at the black eye, "is it good to have one's wish? Is being an English schoolboy as delightful as you thought?"

"Not quite; but it is not bad fun though. Hubert says I fought very well," replied Freddie proudly, his courage coming back now his troubles were over.





CHAPTER VII.

"THERE IS NAE LUCK ABOUT THE HOUSE UPON
A WASHING-DA'."

"**N**URSE is going out for the day; her brother is come from abroad," exclaimed Elsie.

"Hurrah!" cried Minna, "then we can do what we like in the nursery."

"But you forget that Bella and Amelia Primrose are coming," said Sibyl.

"All the better then; they can do what they like too."

"My doll's clothes are sadly in want of washing, suppose we have a grand washing-day," suggested Elsie; "we never can, you know, when nurse is at home, because she calls it 'messaging.'"

The proposal was hailed with rapture by all the girls, and the work was soon distributed. Sibyl and Minna were to be washer-women; Elsie had to find

and sort the clothes, and write a list of them; and Lollie and Dollie were promised the pleasure of hanging them up to dry. Away went Elsie, followed by the little ones, to collect tiny garments from all the dolls' wardrobes; away went Sibyl and Minna to turn on the hot-water tap into the bath, which was to be the wash-tub. They begged a bit of soda from the housemaid, and borrowed the blue bag from the back kitchen without permission; as for soap, the brown windsor from their own bedrooms was called into request.

Just in the midst of the preparations, when little girls were running about in all directions, the Miss Primroses arrived, and Mrs. Berrie called Sibyl down to receive them. As soon as they had taken off their hats they were taken to the busy nursery.

"What are you all doing?" cried Bella, as one after another kissed her in a great hurry, and apologized for not shaking hands, because their hands were full.

"It is washing-day, and we are all very busy," said Elsie.

"What can that have to do with you? we always put our washing out."

"Oh! we are going to wash at home, it is such fun. Will you help? you shall have two of nurse's

large aprons to cover your dresses. Which will you be, washers or starchers or fine ironers?—see, here is the list of clothes, there are a good many; plenty of work for us all.”

Bella Primrose looked very scornful. “Thank you, I am afraid I don’t understand the business;” and Amelia, reading an appalling list of petticoats and other garments, exclaimed in amazement:

“You don’t really mean that you do all that menial work, do you?”

A chorus of silvery laughs arose from the Berrie girls.

“I thought you did not understand,” said Sibyl, “why, it is play, we are having a dolls’ wash, and nobody in the house knows what we are doing. Nurse is out, and we can make as much mess as we like all day.”

“Oh! play, is it? what queer ideas you girls have of play,” said Bella.

“I think it would be rather fun though. I should like to tuck up my sleeves and wash, just to see how it feels, you know,” added her sister.

“If you like, Bella, you can be the head laundress, and order us all about,” suggested Sibyl generously; and that office, as it pleased Miss Bella, was promptly accepted.

"Go and starch the clothes, you idle women," was her first order, given in a commanding voice.

"Pleas'm, they are not washed yet."

"Well, starch them first, and wash them after, what is the difference which is done first?"

I am afraid Miss Bella's work-women were rather rude, for they all laughed outright, and Minna with a twinkle in her eye asked whether her mistress would prefer the ironing being done before everything; and Bella with a blush turned on her heel, saying carelessly:

"Well, do it your own way, you can see I have not been bred a laundress."

"The fact is apparent, madam," said Sibyl with a mock curtsy.

And now began the work in earnest. Lollie and Dollie in high glee carried the basket to the bathroom, and flung in the clothes one by one, while the two elder girls with their sleeves rolled up to their elbows began using brown windsor soap with great energy, till all the garments looked copper-coloured.

"What is the matter with the things?" exclaimed Bella, who was looking on authoritatively, "you are washing them brown instead of white."

"They do look rather dark," replied Minna, doubtfully, "perhaps this soap is not good for them ;

but we have no other. I am sure Mary would suspect something if we took away the kitchen soap."

"Never mind," said Elsie, "let us pretend we have found out a receipt for washing things cream-coloured; it is quite the fashion, you know."

"I know what is the matter," cried Lollie.

"What?"

"You have not put any blue in. One day I



heard nurse say our pinafores were dreadfully yellow, because Mrs. Soapey had not put enough blue."

"Where's the blue bag? put it in directly," commanded Bella.

"But I thought the blue was only put in the rinsing water," remarked Sibyl.

"Of course not, it has to be washed into the

things," said the mistress; "bring the blue, put in plenty of it."

"Let me do it," cried the eager Lollie, and leaning down over the edge of the bath, she began to dash about the water with the blue.

"Look ! look ! de baf is turning into de blue sea, —oh, how pitty !" cried Dollie in ecstasy, and she too leaned over the side and made a clutch at the bag.

Lollie, in her efforts to keep it, gave her sister a push, and plunging it deeper in the water, leaned too much over ; her little feet waved a moment in air, and then with a splash poor Lollie tumbled in among the dolls' clothes, and was pulled up by so many hands at once that she never knew which way she came out again.

She spluttered and screamed and scolded all round : "It is all Dollie's fault, she made me tumble in.—Oh, Elsie, you hurt me ! you pulled my hair.—Sibyl, it was vewy c'uel of you to make the water so hot, it has burned me all over. Oh, oh, I don't like to be wet and uncomforble ! Oh, oh, I wish nurse was at home to dwy me !"

"Come with me, and I will get you some dry clothes," said Sibyl. "I would call Mary, but if they find out what we are doing, all our fun will be stopped."

"We will rinse the clothes in the hand-basin and get the starch ready while you are gone. Is starch made with hot water or cold, please, ma'am?" said Minna, the first half of her speech being to Sibyl and the other to Bella.

"Oh!" replied the latter carelessly, "you can take which you like."

No sooner had Sibyl taken the dripping Lollie away, than Dollie thought it a very good chance to enjoy herself; so she, at risk of drowning, got hold of the blue bag, and unobserved by the others, carried it off to her own especial corner of the nursery, dropping blue rain on the carpet as she went. In getting the hot water for the starch from the tap, Minna leaned so far over the bath that, when Amelia came to hold her basin under the stream too, she accidentally pushed her, and in her efforts to save herself from falling, Minna gave a great kick to the bottom of the bath, which was a metal one. Now it chanced that the bath was weak at that particular corner, it having been bruised before, and the blow completed the mischief. By the time the two girls had their hands very sticky with the starch, Bella noticed a stream of bluish yellow water flowing across the marble of the bath-room.

"The wash-tub is leaking," she cried.

"Oh dear! oh dear! what shall we do? Can't we stop it? let us cram some doll's clothes into the hole," and they began hammering very hard to get some linen into the crack, but to such little purpose that the leak grew larger, and the stream across the floor swelled into a small river. The four girls looked at each other in dismay, but away went the dirty water, flowing, flowing, till it reached the door leading into the nursery, where it made a waterfall down the step and flowed on over the carpet, where the ominous dark stains grew and grew, till the rose-buds and lilies of the carpet were all lost in a blackish tinge.

"Oh, Sibyl, Sibyl, come here, what shall we do?" cried the distressed voices.

Sibyl appeared from the night-nursery, followed by Lollie in a state of half-dress.

"What *is* the matter?" asked Sibyl.

"Oh dear me! won't nurse be angwy now," added Lollie; "how she *will* scold."

As much at a loss as the others how to remedy the evil, Sibyl ran to call her mother.

"My dear girls, what have you done to the nursery?" was her exclamation on entering.

"The bath is leaking and we cannot stop it," sobbed Elsie, who was crying by this time. Elsie

generally found it a good plan, to avoid being scolded, by weeping a great deal beforehand, which so touched her judges that they had not the heart to add to her distress; but I would not advise you who read to try the same system, because it is a very unpleasant one for all parties.

Mrs. Berrie, lifting her skirts, went to the bath, and without further words drew the plug out quickly, and let the water run off fast by its proper channel, and thus saved further deluge.

"Why did not one of you let the water off?" she said.

"We never once thought of it, mamie. How stupid we were to be sure! but we were all too frightened to think."

"I am afraid, my dears, you have forgotten the good old proverb, 'Let the cobbler keep to his last.' You have been setting up as mistresses in an art of which you are ignorant. Next time you have a dolls' wash let nurse show you the proper way. She would certainly find it less trouble than taking up and drying her carpet; but where are the babies all this time?"

"Lollie is changing her clothes, she fell into the bath," confessed Sibyl, "and Dollie,—I do not know, she was here just now."

Going back to the nursery, the missing one was found,—but how? Sitting on the carpet, where the water had flowed round her unheeded, was Miss Dorothy, or what was supposed to be her—a little girl with a face, hands, and pinafore all daubed with blue, a white frock and pinafore covered with streaks and spots of the same colour, and in her hands the unlucky doll Sarah, whose face and hair she was industriously smearing with the same tint. Other proofs of her industry were lying around her in the shape of reels of white cotton from nurse's work-box, Sibyl's blotting-book, and a white scarf of Elsie's, all of which had been dyed with universal indigo.

"Look, mamie," exclaimed Dollie, holding up the scarf and the doll, "isn't it pitty, eberyting blue, blue just like de sky."

"I am afraid my little girl has been doing mischief," said Mrs. Berrie, shaking her head over the spoiled scarf.

Dollie opened her blue eyes very wide, then seeing her mother's grave face, her rosy lips began to quiver and pucker up into funny little creases.

"Mamie, dear, I didn't mean mischie, I wanted to make all de tings a pitty colour."

The cry became a howl as one sister after another rushed up and snatched away their ruined treasures.

Sibyl exclaimed, "You naughty child, what have you done?" and walked off with her blotting-book under her arm.

Elsie began to weep. "Only see, she has ruined my new white scarf."

"Where was it?" asked Mrs. Berrie.

"It was on de chair," sobbed Dollie, "and I took it."

"If it had been in your drawer, as it should be, the child could not have got it," said Mrs. Berrie gravely.

"I forgot to put it away yesterday, the only time I ever have forgotten," sobbed Elsie, going off ruefully.

As for Lollie, she flew up in a fury, snatched away poor Sarah, who was uglier than ever.

"How dare you spoil my doll, Dollie, you took good care not to spoil your Evelina. It is a shame you are a vewy naughty girl indeed, and I shan't play with you all day, *there*."

Poor Dollie rubbed her fists in her wet eyes, and sobbed:

"You are always saying Sarah is udly, and so I wanted to make her pitty, I did; and eberybody is cross wif me,—ah! ah!" wailed poor Dollie.

"It is lucky nurse isn't here, or else she would

be crosser than I am," scolded Lollie. "She won't be able to mend our white frocks any more, 'cause you have turned all her cottons blue."

With a fresh howl Dollie fled to her mother, and hiding her face in her dress, cried :

"I am so sorry, mamie, I didn't know it was naughty."

"You must learn to play only with your playthings, darling, and not with other people's belongings."

"Well, we have had a very unlucky washing-day," said Minna, looking ruefully at the pile of yellow sticky dolls' clothes in the basin.

"There is nae luck about the house,
There is nae luck at a' ;
There is nae luck about the house
Upon a washing-da' ,"

quoted Sibyl.

"I think you are all very much like Dollie," said Mrs. Berrie meaningly.

"Like Dollie, mamie ! why we haven't spoiled everything."

"The carpet looks very much the worse for your morning's work, not to mention the bath and your dolls' clothes,—you too have been playing with things which are not toys. I hope you will learn to keep everything to its proper use in future, and also not

try to imitate your elders without possessing their knowledge. Now, Sibyl, ring for Mary and John to come here directly, we must have the carpet up, and you children had better play in the schoolroom to-day."

It was a very crest-fallen little party that trod the long passage to the schoolroom.

"Is that all the scolding you will get?" asked Bella Primrose.

"Yes, and don't you think it is enough; I feel dreadfully wicked and sorry myself," said Minna.

"Oh, you *do* have an easy time of it! if we had done so much mischief, mamma would have kept us in our rooms without a dinner, and given us endless texts to learn; but we don't mind it so much now, for we have a very kind cook, and as our nursery-window is over the kitchen, we send down a little basket on a string, and cook puts some tarts or sweets into it, so we are not punished so much as mamma thinks we are."

"I should scorn to do that," exclaimed Minna, indignantly.

"I should not mind being kept without tarts a bit," added Elsie; "but when mamma looks grieved at us, it makes us all feel wretched; it is a thousand times worse than a scolding."

"Well, you *are* queer girls," said Amelia Primrose; "but come, things are rather dull, what shall we do to amuse ourselves?"

"Let us play at school, shall we?" suggested Bella.

And the little Berries remembering that politeness required them to amuse their visitors, put away their grave looks and were soon absorbed in more harmless play.





CHAPTER VIII.

FREDDIE AND THE NAUTILUS.



THE boys of the Berrie family had quite as many amusements as the girls. They had a work-room of their own, which was furnished with carpenter's tools, and a lathe, some chemical apparatus (which the girls declared they never used for anything but to stifle them with horrible smells), and certain cabinets and boxes, which contained collections of all sorts of things. Hubert collected butterflies; Harry, birds' eggs; Freddie took his elder cousins' duplicate specimens and made ill-arranged collections of various kinds. The work-room also contained cricket-bats, butterfly-nets, tennis-rackets,

fishing tackle, footballs, and skates, so that whether it were cold weather or warm, the boys need be at no loss for employment.

"Such a beauty! I believe it is the Emperor himself," cried Hubert one August day, entering the schoolroom very hot and breathless with his butterfly-net on his shoulders and Freddie following close on his heels.

"Emperor! what! where?" exclaimed Minna, running to the window.

"Emperor butterfly to be sure,—look here," and Hubert, laying his butterfly-net on the table, took from his coat pocket a tin box, which he opened carefully. "It is not this box," he said, "these are some rare spiders, look at that fellow with the speckled body, and at those lovely green ones with yellow legs, are not they beauties?"

"Ugh! nasty long-legged things," said Minna, with a disgusted peep into the box from afar.

Then Hubert pulled another box from a second pocket, and said:

"Ah, here's a treasure! run Freddie and bring a cup of water, there's a good fellow." Freddie obediently brought it, and Hubert turned out a whole collection of tadpoles, baby-frogs, and caddis-worms, with an infantine fresh-water crayfish,

brandishing his claws, amongst them. "I shall preserve these in spirit," he said.

"Thomas tells me he saw a snake in the shrubbery yesterday, and has promised to catch him for me. I will give him to you," put in Freddie.

"Don't let it come near me," replied Minna, shuddering, "or I shall scream. But where's the Emperor all this time."

Having pulled out a third tin box, Hubert opened it, and displayed in triumph a large scarlet moth spotted with black and yellow, which was lying with folded wings amid a stifling odour of ammonia.

"Poor thing, it is dead," sighed Minna.

"Instantaneous death and painless," said Hubert, as if in apology for having killed it; "a splendid specimen, is it not? I must go to Uncle Herbert's room and look it out at once, he has the book of British Butterflies there."

"I'll come too," said Freddie, following his cousin, as he generally did, a habit which had given him the nickname of Hubert's shadow.

They knocked at the study door, but no one replied; on opening it they found the room was empty.

"I suppose we had better come back when Uncle Herbert is here," said Hubert.

"Oh no, let us go in now. You know where the book is, and I am sure papa will not mind," replied Freddie, entering.

The book was found, and to Hubert's great disappointment his butterfly proved not to be the Emperor, as it lacked the purple spots.

Their business being done, the boys looked around them, for their uncle's study was an interesting room to them all. One of the cabinets was open and a shelf drawn out, which was full of shells. The two young naturalists were attracted towards it, and soon Hubert was giving a lesson to his young disciple.

"See, Freddie, this is the sea-horse."

"It is a sort of a tadpole of a horse," laughed Freddie, "nothing but head and tail."

"I suppose legs would be out of place where there is no ground to gallop over. Look at the *echinus*, that is the sea hedge-hog, and is all over spines and prickles."

"It is just as much in want of legs as the horse. And what is that queer wheel without a rim?"

"The starfish; you see it opens all its rays underneath to seize its food with."

"Seems to be nothing but a mouth without a stomach," said the irreverent Freddie; "but look, Hubert, here is something much prettier than these ;

do you see that jolly little boat, made of transparent pearl?"

"Ah!" cried Hubert, in great delight, "it is a nautilus; I did not know Uncle Herbert had such a good specimen. It is really a boat-shape; they say the first navigators,—before the Argonauts, you know,—took their idea of a ship from that shell. You must know that when it is in the water the fish puts up a kind of sail, made of a thin web, and it steers itself and sails away jollily."

"Where's his rudder?" cried Freddie, making a grasp at the shell.

"Don't touch it!" exclaimed Hubert, "it breaks so easily;" but he was too late, Freddie's rough little fingers had caught hold of the delicate shell, and with a slight crack it fell to pieces in his hand.

He stood holding it out, while a look of horror came into the two boyish faces bent over the frail wreck.

"Oh, I am so sorry," gasped Freddie, while Hubert sighed, "What will Uncle Herbert say?"

"Must we tell, do you think, Hubert?"

"Certainly we must, we could not be sneakish enough not to," decided the elder.

"Then you must tell," said Freddie.

"No, it is your place, you broke it; if I tell, it

would be splitting on you. Let us go directly, there is still time before school to speak to Uncle Herbert. I saw him in the garden some time ago, run at once, there's a good fellow:" so saying, Hubert pushed his cousin out of the room and followed himself, quite forgetting to take his tin case with the butterfly in it.

Freddie went soberly down-stairs and out into the garden, calling in a melancholy voice, "Papa! papa!" As he walked round the shrubbery without hearing any answer, his courage oozed away by degrees, till at last he felt he would rather not meet his father. And when Thomas the gardener said, "Your papa is gone out, Master Fred, it is no use a-callin' for he," Freddie gave quite a sigh of relief, and went off to school ten minutes before the usual time.

Hubert, thinking the confession had been made and that all was right, went also to school, and thought no more of the broken nautilus till his return in the evening, when his uncle came to him in the schoolroom with the tin box in his hand.

"Is this yours, Hubert?"

"Oh, yes, uncle, I had lost it, where was it?"

"Have you no idea?" said Mr. Berrie with a severe glance.

"Was it in your room? I went in to look out a butterfly in the book; you were not there, but I thought you would not mind, uncle."

"Have you nothing else to apologise for, my boy?"

"You mean about the nautilus; I am *very* sorry it happened."

"Then it *was* you who broke it?"

Hubert was just bursting out with an earnest "no," when he thought that perhaps Freddie had not told his father after all, so he got red and confused, and said, "Who told you that I broke it? has not—" here he stopped again more confused than ever, because he did not wish to put the blame on his little cousin.

Mr. Berrie looked very grieved. "Hubert, my boy," he said gravely, "this prevarication is not like you,—the fact that you came away in such a hurry that you left your butterfly-box behind you, proves that you are not without fault. I am very sorry to lose a specimen which I might not be able to get again; but I would rather have lost ten nautilus shells than that you should not be quite open and truthful in the matter. It is so unlike your natural character that I cannot understand it?"

"Oh, uncle, do not think that of me, I did not—"

here again Hubert blushed and stopped short, then muttering a confused, "I must go now, I will see you again later," he rushed off as fast as possible, clattering down-stairs, and was out in the garden calling, "Freddie, Freddie," before his uncle had done shaking his head mournfully.

Master Freddie was very busy with Harry making a trapeze with ropes and sticks hung from two trees, which stood near to each other. Harry was trying it, but either from want of quickness on his own part, or from Freddie not sending the second loop quite in time, he generally missed, and either swung back on one arm, or came down with a leap. On seeing his brother he called out, "You are just the fellow I want, Hu. I've made a famous trapeze, but this boy never swings the loop at the right time; do give us a helping hand."

Hubert only answered shortly, "I cannot now, Hal. Come here, Freddie, I want you."

"What is it?" asked Freddie, hanging on the trapeze loop and putting up his heels.

"I want to speak to you, come here."

Freddie seeing his cousin was in earnest, went to him as slowly and unwillingly as possible, and the two disappeared in a dark walk of the shrubbery.

"Have you not told Uncle Herbert about the nautilus?" asked Hubert.

"I have not seen him," muttered Freddie.

"You have not looked for him you mean. Well, you had better go now."

A pout was on Freddie's flexible lips and tears in his blue eyes.

"I don't want to,—there is no hurry just this minute, is there?"

Hubert thrust his hands in his pockets, and looked disdainfully at his little cousin.

"If you mean to sneak, let me know at once, if you please."

"Oh, Hubert, I do not want to sneak; but—but papa will be so angry, and I cannot bear to have him angry; you go and tell him for me."

"A likely thing, indeed, that I should give the blame to a child like you, when I was there myself, and uncle knows it. No, you must confess it yourself."

Freddie sighed, and turned towards the house; but after a few steps he ran back to his cousin, and clinging to his arm, sobbed:

"Oh, Hu, let me off. I cannot do it, papa will be so vexed with me, and—and—I—hate it when he looks at me in his sorrowful way. Let me off this time."

"Am I to take the blame, then?"

"You—are—bigger, and do not mind so much. Besides he is not your papa, and you don't know how horrid it is when your own father is angry; and—and I will do anything for you if you let me off this time, you dear old good Hubert;" here Freddie put on his most coaxing voice, and rubbed his head on his cousin's sleeve.

The elder boy pushed him away with a scornful gesture.

"If you were not such a little fellow I should say some hard things to you, Fred. Of course, if you don't choose to speak out, I cannot make you; but mark my words, you are beginning to be a sneak."

"It is very unkind of you to use such words."

"A moral coward, then, if you like that any better; and hark here, young one, if you begin by keeping in truths that ought to come out, you will go on by telling lies to hide them." With this the elder boy walked off slowly to the house, leaving Freddie feeling as sore as if he had been thrashed.

You must not think Freddie a really wicked boy, most of his faults were very near being virtues, and his virtues sometimes very nearly faults. He was so fond of pleasing people, and of being loved, that he would hide a truth to save grieving his parents.

With other boys he was not a bit of a coward, and would fight a boy twice his size ; but he would rather fight a dozen boys than feel that his mother did not approve of him. It was, I am sorry to say, more often this love of approbation that made him not quite candid, and caused him to put on his angelic manners, rather than any real goodness in his heart.

Just now the feeling that Hubert despised him was very hard ; but as he slowly went back to Harry, he thought even that was better than to vex his papa. He did not think how much more his want of candour would vex Mr. Berrie, for children never know how much their parents can see of faults they think they have hidden away.

Hubert returned to his uncle, whom he found in his study, not reading or writing, but standing sadly at the window.

"Uncle Herbert, I cannot tell you any more about the nautilus. I am only very sorry it is broken, but I really could not help it."

"Am I to take that as a confession, my boy?"

"You may take it as you please ; but I have no more to say."

This speech sounded rather insolent ; but poor Hubert had no intention of seeming so, he only meant

that he was unable to explain; and was going out of the room, when his uncle called angrily:

"Stop a moment, Hubert, I have not done with you yet."

The boy turned with a kind of dogged look.

"Tell me this," said his uncle, "was any one with you in my room?"

"I cannot really answer, uncle. You know I was there, and I am very sorry,—is not that enough?" and Hubert made his escape this time before another question could be asked.

Mr. Berrie was very much puzzled, and did not know what to think. It troubled him much to think Hubert had not been quite open; but it troubled him more to fear that he was shielding some one else who was coward enough to let him take the blame; so the matter dropped, and Mr. Berrie decided to watch the boys closely.

Harry's manner had not changed the least, he was the same droll, careless creature as usual. Hubert was grave, but perfectly calm, and his expression was fearless and open as ever; but Freddie was more than usually demonstrative of affection to his father, very anxious to please him in every way, and more angelic than ever to his mother. It was only when he spoke to Hubert that Mr.

Berrie noticed a curious tone of humility in Freddie's voice, and a kind of timidity in his actions, as if he were mutely asking his pardon for something.

It might have been noticed that Mr. Berrie called his wife into his study, and remained some time talking with her before she went to the nursery for her good-night talk with the children, after the late dinner.





CHAPTER IX.

ROUND THE NURSERY WINDOW.

(A chapter of children's talk.)



“AMIE’S hour,” as the children called it, was to them the most delightful hour of the day. In winter they all drew their little chairs round the fire, and placed a large easy one in front for mamie; and then she sat ready to tell stories, or to answer questions for all the little people who clustered round her. In the summer the chairs were drawn up round the large bay-window, towards the sunset, and its last red rays often fell across the golden heads of the children and lit up their bright little faces.

This evening the sky was particularly lovely. Sibyl sat in the window dreaming, looking at the clouds and forming fairy pictures out of them. There were mountains with golden castles on the top, and there were little golden fairies flitting about over a

rosy lake, and a great dark dragon with fiery jaws going towards the mountain. Elsie and Minna sat hand in hand as usual; Lollie was on a little stool at her mother's feet; and Dollie was quite happy on her lap, while Freddie lay full length on a white



woolly rug in the midst, his hands clasped under his head, and his heels kicking up in the air.

Lollie. "What a dear mamie you are to tell us nice stories."

Mrs. B., laughing. "Is that what mothers are made for?"

Minna. "No, they are to teach their boys and girls not to be naughty."

Dollie. "No, mamies are made for de little dirls to sit on der lap and cuddle them up like dis ;" here she puts her arms round her mother's neck and almost strangles her.

Lollie. "Who made you big, mamma?"

Mrs. B. "I grew. God makes us grow; you know I was once as small as you."

Dollie. "And did you sit on your mamma's lap? Where does God live? if I find Him I will ask Him to make me tum big too; then when you tum little again I can nurse you; won't dat be nice?"

Freddie, laughing. "Big people don't grow little again, baby."

Dollie. "What do they do, den, drow bigger and bigger and bigger?" (Here she put her arms up higher and higher.) "How tall will you be at last, mamma?"

Elsie. "Oh, Dollie, what a silly child you are! Why, if people grew too tall the houses would not hold them."

Dollie. "What do you do when you get very, very old, mamma?"

Minna, hastily. "Oh, do not let us talk of that, I like better to think what we shall be when we are grown up. I mean to be an artist, because I like drawing so much."

Sibyl. "So will I too."

Mrs. B. "You had better be a musician."

Lollie. "What shall I be, I wonder?"

Elsie. "Why, you are so fond of cutting paper, that you had better be like the man who cuts holes in the railway tickets." They all laughed, and thought this a capital joke of Elsie's.

Freddie. "I mean to be a traveller and go abroad, and get shipwrecked, and fight lions and tigers, and bring home their skins to make rugs for mamie to lie upon. It is so nice, lying on a fur rug; and you, Elsie, what will you be?"

Elsie, gravely. "I shall not be a player or an artist, I am going to be a mother, and make pretty frocks for my children."

Minna. "But you don't know if any one will marry you, Elsie."

Elsie. "Oh yes they will, if I ask them. I wonder what my surname will be then."

Dollie. "I shall be always a little dirl. I don't want to be a big woman and learn lessons all day, and not play with dolls any more."

Mrs. B. "We cannot tell at all what our future life will be, all we have to do is to be as good as we can now, and leave all the rest to God."

Elsie. "It is not so easy to be good, some nasty

little temper is always coming up, and then the boys tease one, and make one crosser than ever."

Minna. "I think the best way would be for every one to live in a little house all by himself, and then we should do just as we like, and never get out of temper, because we should have nothing to make us cross; we *must* be good then."

Mrs. B. "In that case we should lose all the opportunities of fighting against our faults and of overcoming them."

Elsie. "Is it not better not to fight at all?"

Mrs. B. "Sometimes it is best to fight; which would you think the bravest man, the one who went away and let the enemy plunder his country, or the one who fought for its freedom with all his might?"

Freddie. "Of course the one who fights, the other fellow would be a coward indeed."

Mrs. B. "Such a coward that I should not like any of my children to be like him."

Freddie. "I should hope not, indeed,—for my part I like to fight."

Mrs. B. "Oh, Freddie, my boy, there are more ways than one of fighting; some are called on to fight others, and some to fight themselves, and this is by far the hardest part of the battle. It is easy enough to resist a sin when you know it is a sin,

and have a disgust for it; but it is when our temptations put on the dress of virtues, and we ourselves are inclined to them, then it is that we are most likely not to fight in earnest."

Minna. "How do you mean, auntie?"

Mrs. B. "Let us suppose that one of us has done some injury to another without intending it. If the injury has been done, what is our first duty?"

Elsie and Sibyl. "To confess it and ask pardon."

Mrs. B. "Suppose then that a wicked little temptation to hide the truth came to us, dressed up like the virtue of love, and because we love the person we have injured so much, we hide the truth, to save him the pain of knowing we have done wrong, is not that laying down our arms when we ought to fight?"

Lollie. "I think the person would wather not know it if it is anything vewy disagweable."

Mrs. B. "But if an innocent person is blamed for what we have done because we are not quite honest!"

A chorus. "Oh then, of course, one must tell the truth whatever happens."

(It might have been noticed here that Freddie turned himself over on the woolly rug, and instead

of lying with his face upward in the crimson glow, he hid it on his two arms in the rug.)

Mrs. B. "You see, as we live in the world, we can none of us live only for ourselves, every word we say, every action we do, affects some one else."

Minna, laughing. "My idea of a lot of little hermit's cells would certainly be best for us, and let every one please himself, and not be troubled to please other people."

Lollie, eagerly. "I know what you mean, mamie, I have often noticed that when I am cwooss nurse is cwooss too, and then Miss Miller is cwooss, and Freddie is a tease, and Dollie cwys, and it seems that evwybody is howwid altogetherr."

Mrs. B. "All because one little tiny mite is naughty, eh? Well, it is true, naughtiness spreads all over a house when it once gets in."

Elsie. "Like a spoonful of nasty salt in our tea. Harry put some in mine once."

Mrs. B. "Yes, exactly like that; so it proves how necessary it is for us all to be good, so that the goodness may spread like a lump of sugar, and make all the house sweet."

Sibyl, reflectively. "I don't believe in good influence, the bad is so much stronger. One never hears of the good ears of corn making the smutty ones

whole again; but some bad ears will blight several good ones, and they say, you know, that one black sheep spoils a flock."

Mrs. B. "Then, my dear, we must turn out all the badness as soon as possible, and not let it get amongst us."

Elsie. "If we only had a kind of machine in us to tell us to stop when we are going wrong, how nice that would be."

Mrs. B. "So we have, dear child."

Elsie. "Oh! you mean conscience; I think conscience is all a mistake, and not a bit of good."

Mrs. B., astonished. "Mistake! what *do* you mean, my child?"

Elsie. "Why, it only annoys us after we have done a naughty thing; but if it would only be wise enough to tell us *before*, how much more useful it would be."

Mrs. B. "It does tell us before. Dollie, darling, tell me again what happened to you when the candied fruits were in the cupboard."

Lollie, all eagerness. "I will tell you, I was there too."

Mrs. B. "I asked Dollie, my dear."

Freddie, peeping up with one eye. "That is just like Lollie, always wanting to be first."

Dollie. "I tan tell you, mamie, it was like dis. Lollie and me, we were in de tupboard one day, and we saw a nice box, and we opened it, we did, and we saw all de nice sudar fruit, and oh! it did look so dood, dat we almost put our hands into de box, and Lollie she had one of de goodies almost quite in her mouf. Den we said to ourselves, 'If mamie tan't see, God tan see, betause His eyes tan look everywhere at once, and see in de dark;' and so we hurried up, and put down de fruit into de box, and shut up the cover, and we bof runned away as fast as ever we could."

Lollie. "Just as if somebody was running after us."

Mrs. B. "What put that thought into your hearts?"

Minna. "God."

Elsie. "Conscience."

Mrs. B. "You are both right, it was God who made your conscience speak, as he always does before we do a naughty action; but so few will listen to it before, while afterwards it will not be quiet till we have heard it."

Elsie. "Yes, mamie, I was wrong, it does speak in time."

Freddie. "But if we do wrong by accident, conscience cannot prevent that."

Mrs. B. "No, my boy, accident is not wrong, it only becomes so if we let any one else suffer for it."

Freddie was silent, and remained with his face hidden in his arms until nurse had come to take the little ones to bed, and the elder girls had gone to the drawing-room. Then he started up, and with a flushed face ran to his father's study and knocked.

"Come in," said Mr. Berrie, and his little boy opened the door, flying into his arms, sobbing bitterly. "Why, Freddie, boy, what is the matter?"

"Did—did you scold Hubert because your nautilus was broken, papa?"

"Was I not right to scold him if he had broken it and would not confess?"

"He did not break it. It was I, papa, and I was so sorry about it that I did not want you to know it. I could not bear to grieve you; but—but if Hubert had to take the blame, I must tell you, papa; it was quite an accident. We were admiring the shells and star-fishes, and I did not know the nautilus was so brittle; you will forgive me, won't you, papa?"

Mr. B. "If you will promise to be more brave in the future. You know, Freddie, there are two kinds of courage, moral and physical. You have plenty of physical courage, and do not shrink from pain, or from holding your own among other boys; but

morally you are, I fear, a great coward; you are afraid of a word of blame, or of losing the approval of those you love. Any bully can stand up and fight another boy, or any fool can rush into danger; but it requires a man and a Christian to own oneself in the wrong, and to stand up bravely against censure. Now I pray that my son may be a true man and brave in all ways."

"I will try, indeed, papa," whispered Freddie as he ran off with a happy face. In the entrance-hall he met Hubert and Harry, who had been out catching bats, and had one or two in their handkerchiefs, where they were squeaking piteously. "I have told papa, Hu," whispered Freddie.

"There's a good fellow. It is all right; but I did not mind much."

In spite of that assertion Hubert sprang very lightly up the stairs, whistling all the time; and when his uncle met him, and shook hands very heartily, his round face beamed more than ever. No words were needed, but Hubert knew that his uncle did not misunderstand him any more.





CHAPTER X.

BIRTHDAY PLANS.



"T O-MORROW is Minna's birthday, mamie; we must have a party; and please, mamie, dear, give me some pennies to buy her a present," said Dollie, when her mother entered the nursery one morning.

"And me too," cried Lollie.

"I am sure *I* want some money, I haven't even a half-penny to buy a marble with," added Freddie.

"I know all about Minna's birthday," said Mrs. Berrie, "and our plans are already arranged, —there is to be no party."

"No party!" cried three dolorous voices, and three disappointed faces turned their eyes in reproach on their mother.

"No party and no cake?" exclaimed Lollie.

"No candles and no nuffing?" cried Dollie. "It won't be a birfday at all. How can Minna grow any bigger if she does not have a birfday?"

Mrs. Berrie laughed. "I said there was to be no party; but perhaps there is something better."

The three little faces changed from sad length into merry breadth in a moment.

"Better than a party! Oh, mamie, what can it be?"

"Minna chose her treat herself, and a very nice one it is. We are all going over to Uncle Charles's house, and are to give the village school-children a treat on the lawn, just as Minna used to do when her mother and father were at home. You may wait on the children if you like."

"What! and give them all the cake?" asked Lollie anxiously.

"Yes; Minna likes best to let the poor children enjoy it."

"But suppose they eat it all, shan't we have even a little tiny bit? Oh, that won't be a nice birthday!"

Mrs. Berrie laughed, and was going away, when the three caught hold of her skirts, exclaiming, "Oh, mamie! our pennies, we must buy some presents."

"Then the gifts will be mine."

"Oh no; they must be all our own."

"But if it is my money?"

"Look here," said Freddie, "if you give us the pennies for our very own, we can buy what we like; then the presents are ours, don't you see?"

"I know a better plan. I will give you your weekly pennies now instead of on Monday, then you can spend them as you like."

This was agreed upon; and the little girls being made happy with their coins, went dancing off to ask nurse to take them out directly. Freddie remained behind with an unsatisfied look on his face.

"What is the matter, Freddie? does not that arrangement suit you?"

"No," said he; "I am just as badly off as I was before."

"Why, how can that be, with your money in your hand?"

"If you ask me presently, I shall not have any money."

"Where will it be?"

"I want to tell you and I don't want to tell you," said Freddie meditatively.

"I will wait till you feel inclined to tell me," and Mrs. Berrie sat down and took Freddie on her lap. It was only when they were alone that he allowed himself the pleasure of being in his mother's arms, for he thought himself too big to let others see him in that babyish position.

"If you had *given* us the pennies it would have been all right; but if you say it is my weekly money it is just the same as if I had not had it."

"That sounds very much like a riddle; you must explain it to me, sonnie."

With a sudden burst of confidence Freddie said:

"I owe my weekly money for six weeks to Thomas."

"To Thomas the gardener!—how comes that?"

Freddie pulled his mother's face down closer to his, and said very confidentially,

"Do you remember one day when I went with nurse to the cobbler's with my old boots to be mended? Well, he told her that his wife was dead, and that he was so poor without the money she earned, that he would not be able to keep on the shop, and that he had no food nor clothes to give his children."

"I remember nurse telling me of it," said Mrs. Berrie, who did not add that she had been very charitable to the man ever since.

"Well," continued Freddie, "I was so sorry for him, that I borrowed a shilling from Thomas, and when I went to school next morning, I ran into the shop and gave it to him; and you may be sure I did not have to ask him twice to take it. He said, 'God bless you, young gentleman,' and he looked as happy as a king; so I felt very jolly too,—that was the day I was so good at school, and got to the top of the class."

"But instead of borrowing, why did you not wait till you had enough of your own to give?" asked Mrs. Berrie, kissing her boy's bright face.

Freddie was half-crying by this time, and said:

"Because that would have taken six weeks at twopence a week, don't you see, mamie? A man whose children are starving now cannot wait all that time; why, they might have been dead before then, and how sorry I should have been. This Monday I shall have paid back tenpence, and next week it will be all paid,—how jolly, to be sure!"

Another kiss fell on the boy's forehead, and his mother said:

"I like you to help the poor, my dear boy, and

am very glad you spend your money so; but next time it must be your own, and not that of Thomas. It is wrong to get into debt even to do a kindness, and worse to borrow of a poor man who can ill afford to lend."

Freddie rubbed his head against his mother's face in a coaxing way, and said:

"I will not do it any more, mamie; but, you see, if the poor children *had* been starved while I was waiting to save up a shilling, how dreadful it would have been. You understand now what I meant when I wished you had *given* me the money instead of calling it my pocket-money. It was only my weekly twopence which I promised to repay Thomas. Anything else that is given me I could spend."

"Oh no, indeed you could not, my boy, not a penny is our own as long as we owe a penny. Even if I gave you another twopence now, you would have to give it to Thomas, if you are really honest."

"Then Minna will have to do without a present from me." The little boy's face became very long.

"She would like that much better than taking what is due to a poor man."

"Ah!" sighed Freddie, getting off Mrs. Berrie's lap and going sadly towards the door, "it is a very hard world for little boys."

"Especially for those with soft hearts," smiled his mother.

If Minna had not quite understood the ways of the family, she might have thought herself very unkindly treated that day, for nobody seemed to want her. She met Dollie and Lollie trotting hand in hand down the stairs, with something clutched very tight in the hands which were free. As soon as they saw her, Dollie called out:

"You must not want to tum wif us, Minna."

"And you must not look at what we have bought when we come home," added Lollie.

"You don't know what we've dot in our hands," nodded Dollie, pretending to open hers and shut it up very tight again. "It is a secret about you, only you mustn't know it."

Next her aunt went out with Sibyl and Elsie.

"Oh!" cried Minna, "you did not tell me you were going out; I should have liked to come too."

Elsie looked distressed that her friend should think she neglected her.

Sibyl said: "I hope you will not think us rude, Min; but we have some private business with mamie."

Minna stood looking wistfully after them, and at the door Elsie glanced back; then she ran and put

her arms round her cousin's neck, and whispered, "We shall not be long, Minna. I wish I could tell you what we are going for, but it is a secret,—it is something you will like," and with a kiss Elsie was off again.

Even her brothers went out alone, and when she offered her company, replied, "They did not want any girls bothering about."

Poor Minna!





CHAPTER XI.

MINNA'S BIRTHDAY.

THE morning was as bright as could be desired on Monday, and no sooner did Minna wake than she



felt it was a festal day. The first thing she saw were two little angels in white bending over her, and looking eagerly in her face, and as soon as she opened her eyes they kissed her, and said, "Many happy weturns of your birfday."

"Dollie and Lollie! why how did you come here? and in your night-gowns too," asked Minna, for the children were seated like little crosslegged Turks, one on each side of the pillow.

"We have been here ever so long, waiting for you to wake," said Lollie.

"And it seemed as if your two eyes were gummed togefer, and would never open any more," added her sister.

"We wunned away from our little beds ever so long ago," said Lollie. "We've bwrought our pwesents here, for we did not want to put ours amongst all the others on the bweakfast-table."

"We fought you wouldn't see dem among the big fings, because they are so little," put in Dollie.

"We had not much money, you see," added Lollie. "Look! here is mine, take care how you open it, you might bwreak it."

Minna sat up in bed, and having kissed her cousins, and to their great delight, made them put their rosy toes beneath the counterpane, proceeded to open her parcel. She took off one paper, two papers, three papers, and each time the two little girls shook their small shoulders with laughing, saying, "Isn't it fun?" At last the fourth cover

disclosed such a droll thing that Minna burst into a laugh. It was a most unwholesome gingerbread cake in the form of a fat man with a cocked hat. He had a staff made of barley-sugar, two round eyes of raspberry drops, and the buttons on his coat were white comfits.

"But he only has one foot," said Minna, as soon as she could speak for laughing.

Lollie looked guilty. "I—I wanted to taste whether he was good, and only meant to eat one of his wee little toes, but all the foot came into my mouth," she confessed.

"We tried to mend it wif gum, but it would not stick, so we parted it between us, and we eat it, we did," added Dollie. Until now she had kept her parcel hidden in her chubby hands, but now she brought it forth, saying with pride: "Here is anofer present for you. I bought it all wif my very own penny."

"It feels very sticky," laughed Minna, taking a greasy and much bruised packet from Dollie's hand. With difficulty she opened it, and found five of those round sweets called bull's-eyes, in a state of melting, and so united together that they could never be separated again. Dollie's round eyes opened into melancholy circles.

"Oh!" she cried, "dey are not pitty any more, dey all stuck togefer in a nasty mess. Yesterday dey were so pitty, one was blue, and one red, and one green, and two yellow; oh, dey looked beautifut!"

"Perhaps you put them in your mouth?" said Minna shrewdly.

"No I did not, at least only one of dem, to try if de taste was dood; and I tooked such care of dem dat I held 'em tight in my hand all night, while I was asleep, tight like dis," and Dollie squeezed her sticky little fist so closely that she could scarcely open it again.

"I understand," said Minna, giving her a kiss and very profuse thanks, after which the two little white-robed figures trotted barefoot back to their own cribs in the night-nursery, from whence they began to call nurse to make haste and get the bath ready, for they wanted to be first at breakfast.

Every one else seemed to have the same intention, for all the children were early assembled round a very high white mound on Minna's plate, looking very earnestly at it, and one or the other now and then lifting a corner of the *serviette* which covered it to peep underneath. When Minna herself came in every one drew back and tried to look as though there was nothing peculiar on the table, and she

was equally clever in pretending to be very much surprised.

"Why, what is that white mountain on my plate?" she exclaimed.

"The table is a map of Switzerland, and that is Mont Blanc," said Harry.

"And Minna is the Jungfrau," added Hubert.

"Mind, there's an avalanche coming," cried a voice from under the table, and Freddie's hand came from beneath, and pulled off the *serviette*, which slipped in a snowy heap on the floor.

"Oh, what a lot of presents!" cried Minna, clasping her hands in delight, as she proceeded to open them. There were a paint-box from her uncle, a work-box from her aunt, a story-book from Sibyl, a doll's-fan from Elsie, a silver thimble from her brothers, and last of all a little jewel-case and a dirty parcel. She took up the case and found a pretty turquoise locket, which had come from Italy. "That is from mamma and papa, I know," cried Minna in delight, and her aunt nodded assent while she kissed her treasure. The curious parcel was left unnoticed after this, till Freddie, who had been impatient for some time, cried out:

"You have forgotten one of your presents, Min."

She opened it rather daintily, and found a little

box with a strong smell of camphor. It contained a cockroach and two wasps and an earwig, all well fastened to a bit of cork with pins.

"Ugh! the horrid things," cried Minna, quite forgetting that politeness required her to show gratitude for presents.

Freddie flushed red to the tips of his ears. "If you don't like my present you can give it back to me. I had no money to buy thimbles and fans and girls' things with, so I thought you would like the most precious specimens in my collection of 'Domestic and venomous insects.'"

Minna was all penitence, and ran round to kiss her young cousin. "Oh, Freddie, I am so sorry, they frightened me for a moment, and I thought Harry had played a trick on me. I shall really value your present, and will hang up the 'specimens' on the wall of my room. I hope they won't make me dream, though," she added to herself as she returned to her seat, while Freddie, though much consoled, muttered these mysterious words:

"Girls never know anything about anything."

After breakfast the large waggonette and an open carriage stood at the door. Mr. and Mrs. Berrie with Dollie filled the latter, while the seven cousins crowded into the waggonette, and disposed themselves

amongst the hampers ; and then the whole party drove away in great glee, waving hats and calling out, " Hurra ! for Minna and her birthday."

Berrylands, the country house of Mr. Charles Berrie, was about three miles from the town. It was an old Tudor house, surrounded by a large garden and grounds. What had once been its park was now made into corn-lands and grazing meadows, for the family who formerly owned it had become poor, and after selling the land piece by piece, at last sold the house to Mr. Berrie.

" I am glad Nancy has opened the windows," said Minna, as they entered the grounds. " I was afraid the house would look as if there was somebody dead ; it always does when papa and mamma are away."

It looked bright enough this morning, with the flowers in the beds on the lawn, and the door wide open, and with bright-faced old Nancy, the house-keeper, and Rold the butler, with his shining white beard and hair, standing at the door to receive them.

Nancy embraced Minna, and the two exchanged the last news they had received from the absent mother ; and Rold took possession of Hubert and Harry with their uncle, to show them some improvements in the house, which Mr. Berrie had ordered to be made.

"Now, mamie," said Sibyl, "you are not to fatigue yourself a bit. You are to sit in a nice chair on the terrace and enjoy a rest. We girls will make all the preparations; we wish to do it all ourselves."

"Very well, I shall leave you alone, then," laughed the mother, knowing very well that she would be called upon for help half-a-dozen times during the morning.

And indeed she was; hardly twenty minutes had passed when she heard a call of, "Mamie, come here, please;" and when she arrived on the scene of action, there was indeed a need of her. The three elder girls were in the butler's pantry with large aprons on, their sleeves rolled up, and surrounded by piles of bread and cake and pots of jam. Sibyl was cutting bread, Minna spreading jam, and Elsie putting the pieces in style on the plates. The two little ones, who always copied their elders, had decided to give their dolls a school feast, and mounted on two chairs at a shelf, where several of the reserve provisions were placed, proceeded to cut bread-and-butter with a carving-knife. So busy were the elders that they did not notice them till a scream from Dollie attracted Sibyl, who ran to find nearly a pot of jam spreading itself over a jagged crust of bread in the butter-plate, from which it poured

off like lava from Vesuvius, and formed a Red Sea round the island of butter. But this was not the worst—ominous red stains were dropping all over the table, and Dollie was holding out her hand, screaming :

“Oh ! oh ! de nasty knife did tut my poor little finger. Look, Sibbie, dat is my blood, my very own blood ; all de inside of my hand is tumming out. Oh ! oh !”

“Put it into a little water, like nurse does,” cried Lollie, very officious as usual ; “here’s a jug of water,” and Lollie pulling a large jug from the high shelf, upset it, and found herself deluged in a shower-bath of milk.

When her shrieks were added to Dollie’s, Sibyl and Minna thought it high time to call mamma, who came, and very soon set things right again.

Nurse had walked over, and was ready with a dry holland frock for Lollie, for experience had taught her never to go out for the day without a change for the younger children ; and Nancy washed the butter, wiped up the spilled milk, and sent the jug to the dairy to be refilled. Mrs. Berrie took Dollie’s cut finger under her own care, and then carried the child to the terrace with her.

The next time mamie was called was to quell an

insurrection among the boys, who would not obey the girls. Harry and Freddie eat more jam than they put on the bread, and Hubert persisted in practising the balancing trick with one of Elsie's artistically piled plates of cake. There was he, twirling the plate round on his first finger, held high in air, and Elsie dancing frantically round with weeping eyes, crying:

"Put down my plate, Hubert, you'll break it,—all the cake will come into little bits,—give it up to me,"—with that she caught his sleeve, and crash! down went the plate. All Elsie's prophecy came quite true, and she went on her knees to pick the fragments from the sanded floor, sobbing: "I told you so. I knew you would spoil all my work, you great tease."

Kind-hearted Hubert was all repentance; but the mischief was done. He ventured to say, that if she had not pulled his arm it would not have happened; but at this the tears became a flood.

"You—are—a very—unkind—boy—to put—the blame on me," sobbed Elsie, and Hubert's chivalry was so awakened, that on his aunt's entrance he said, with his most good-humoured smile:

"Here you see the sad effects of practising juggler's tricks with improper materials, Aunt

Olive. I tried to keep a plate of cake in the air, and it has come to earth."

"I think you had better leave the housekeeping arrangement to the girls, and go and amuse yourselves out of doors," said his aunt.

"Ah, yes; come along, Harry, you know we have our preparations to make too," said Hubert, who went away followed by the other two, and they were seen no more till dinner-time, though certain sounds of hammering might have been heard proceeding from the field adjoining the house.

The family dined early, and were still at table when a sound of young voices singing was heard in the distance, and a waving of red and green flags was seen above the hedge of the shrubbery.

"Here are the school-children!" exclaimed the Berries, jumping up from table at once, all except Lollie, who stayed to finish her own and Elsie's strawberries, after which she too went calmly out, and was one of the party ready to meet the visitors on the lawn.

In marched the school-children, with banners waving, and drew up in file in front of the house as if for inspection, opposite the eight young expectant faces, and then they waited for orders. All the children carried mugs, which Minna proceeded to

collect and put on the table. The school-mistress, who was very stout, was left so far behind that there was time for a great deal of staring to be done before she reached her scholars and told them to salute the young ladies, on which the boys doffed their caps, and the girls made the little bobs which in village schools pass for curtsies. Then Minna and the cousins shook hands with the mistress and all the scholars, who seemed half afraid of touching the young ladies. In the midst of this welcome, who should drive in at the gate but Mrs. Primrose and her two little girls, who had been asked to the school treat.

"Just what I should have expected of the Berries," said Mrs. Primrose, drawing herself up on seeing the greetings going on; "they have no idea of keeping up their position. Remember, Arabella, I do not wish you to treat the village children like equals."

"Oh no, mamma, of course not," replied the dutiful Bella.

In a very short time Minna had taken the children to the fields, where the boys had made various arrangements for their amusement. Harry had tied an old wooden doll of his sister's on an upright stick as Aunt Sally. Hubert had brought

out his wickets and ball for cricket, and was not long making up an eleven, which to Minna's great relief took the big boys off her hands. It was easy enough for her, with Sibyl and Elsie, to amuse the girls; they played at "Oranges and Lemons," and "Drop the Handkerchief," and "Sally Water" for a long time. The only trouble was that Bella Primrose and her sister would not play at any game in which they had to take hands with the school-children, and generally stood apart out of the ring. To avoid this, Sibyl proposed that the two should hold up hands in the midst for "Oranges and Lemons," which they consented to do, till some of the children had collected behind them, when Bella exclaimed in French:

"Minna, I wish you would tell these children not to touch me, their dirty hands will soil my dress."

"I wish they would not crowd round me so either," said her sister in the same language, "it is very unpleasant."

"Would you like us to take your places?" asked Minna, and she and Sibyl released the two little fine ladies, who walked off to the lawn, where Mrs. Berrie was entertaining the Rector and his wife, and some other ladies.

"Are you not playing with the children?" asked Mrs. Berrie.

"We do not care about it, thank you."

The games went on much more briskly without them, and it was a set of very hot and hungry children that were led in procession by Minna to the side-lawn, where the tea-tables were spread. There was a general rush to the collection of mugs, which were all put in the middle of the table: little mugs and big ones, white, blue, green, and red mugs, pewter ones and tin ones. Every child pulled out his own from the heap, and seated himself at the table expectantly.

"Would you like to pour out the tea or the milk, Bella?" asked Minna.

"Neither, thank you; I am afraid of the poor children spilling them over my frock. I will hand the cake."

"Then you must wait, for they must eat the bread-and-butter first," said Minna shortly.

"Let me pour out the tea," cried Lollie, grasping a large tea-pot with her two hands till the tea ran out at the spout.

"No, thank you," said Sibyl, "you are more likely to water the flowers with it."

"Let me have de milk-jug," exclaimed Dollie, anxious to help.

"No, no, don't give it to her, Sibyl," said

Minna, "she does not know how much to put in, and the milk will not go round."

So the two little ones were made happy with plates full of bread-and-butter; and the first thing Dollie did was to upset half-a-dozen slices on the ground, and Lollie hastening to help her, caught her foot in the grass and fell flat, plate and all, over the stooping Dollie.

"A very good thing you had not the scalding tea in your hand, Miss Lollie," laughed Sibyl, helping to pick up both children and provisions.

"Oh! it's all fallen on de buttery side, and de little ants has stuck on to de butter,—nasty little ants," wailed Dollie.

Now the eating has begun in earnest, and if you could only have seen the platefuls disappear, and the cups become empty incessantly!

"What are you crying for, Lot?" asked Elsie of a very fat chubby little boy, who was rubbing his fists in his eyes.

"Please, miss, I do want some more plum-cake, 'còs 'tis so good."

"Well, why don't you take it? here it is."

Lot began to howl louder than ever.

"Please, miss, I've a-eat so much I can't eat any more," he sobbed piteously.

"Greedy little fellow!" exclaimed Amelia Primrose, who was passing near, "he ought to be ashamed of himself."

"Poor boy," answered Elsie, "he lives on crusts and beans all the year, and never has cake except at the school feast, no wonder he enjoys it."

"Have you not had enough tea, Martha?" asked Sibyl of a big heavy-faced girl who was holding out a blue cup.

"No, miss, I've only had five cups yet," replied Martha, with innocent candour.

After tea there were games and trials of skill on the lawn. The boys jumped in sacks, which so much amused Freddie that he would try it too; but he tumbled down, and with all his kicking could not get up again. Then the girls ran races, and not one of them could beat Minna, who ran with them.

But what is this that Hubert and Rold are bringing out? a very large tub full of sand, and a long pole with a kind of spade at the end.

"Now, boys and girls, come here," cried Hubert. "This, you must know, is the Yellow sea, and it has got rather choked with sand; however, there are several very good sand-eels in it, if you like to poke them out,—who'll try?"

Several boys shuffled on their feet, and nudged each other's elbows, and at last one bolder than the others came forward and took the pole. After one or two trials he brought out a parcel, and was told he might have its contents. You may be sure that no one else was shy of fishing sand-eels after that. And what funny eels they brought out! There were whistles and tops, dolls and toys, books and comforters; and if by chance the dolls fell to the boys and tops to the girls, they very soon found suitable owners, for a great deal of exchanging went on.

By this time it was dark enough for Hubert and Harry to bring out their last great surprise, and a brilliant exhibition of fireworks took place, after which a home-made fire-balloon of blue and white gauze paper, with Minna's name on it in red letters, ascended amidst a great clapping of hands and shouts of, "Three cheers for Miss Minna," from the crowd of upturned mouths.

"Where does it go to?" asked one of the smallest children.

"Up to heaven, I do think," said another.

"I s'pose it do turn into a star when it do get up high enough," added a third, when all at once a dismal and surprised chorus arose of, "Law! 'tis gone; where did it go to? did ye see?"

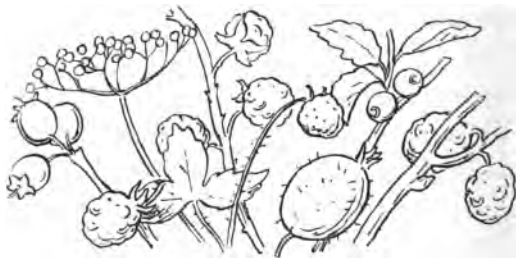
Nobody being able to answer this, the children began to look down on the earth again, and were quite willing to shout, at the bidding of the eldest monitor :

"Three cheers for Mr. and Mrs. Berrie in foreign parts," and then the same for "Mr. and Mrs. Berrie, and all the Miss and Master Berries here present." After which they flourished their flags, and departed in file, singing "Marching onward" all up the road, till their voices became faint in the distance.

A sleepy little party drove home to town, and Minna's birthday was over.

"It was a very good birthday after all," said Lollie, "and there was cake enough for everybody."

"But Minna looks just the same as she looked yesterday; she isn't a bit bigger, though she is a whole year older," remarked Dollie, as she laid her sleepy head in Sibyl's lap in the waggonette.

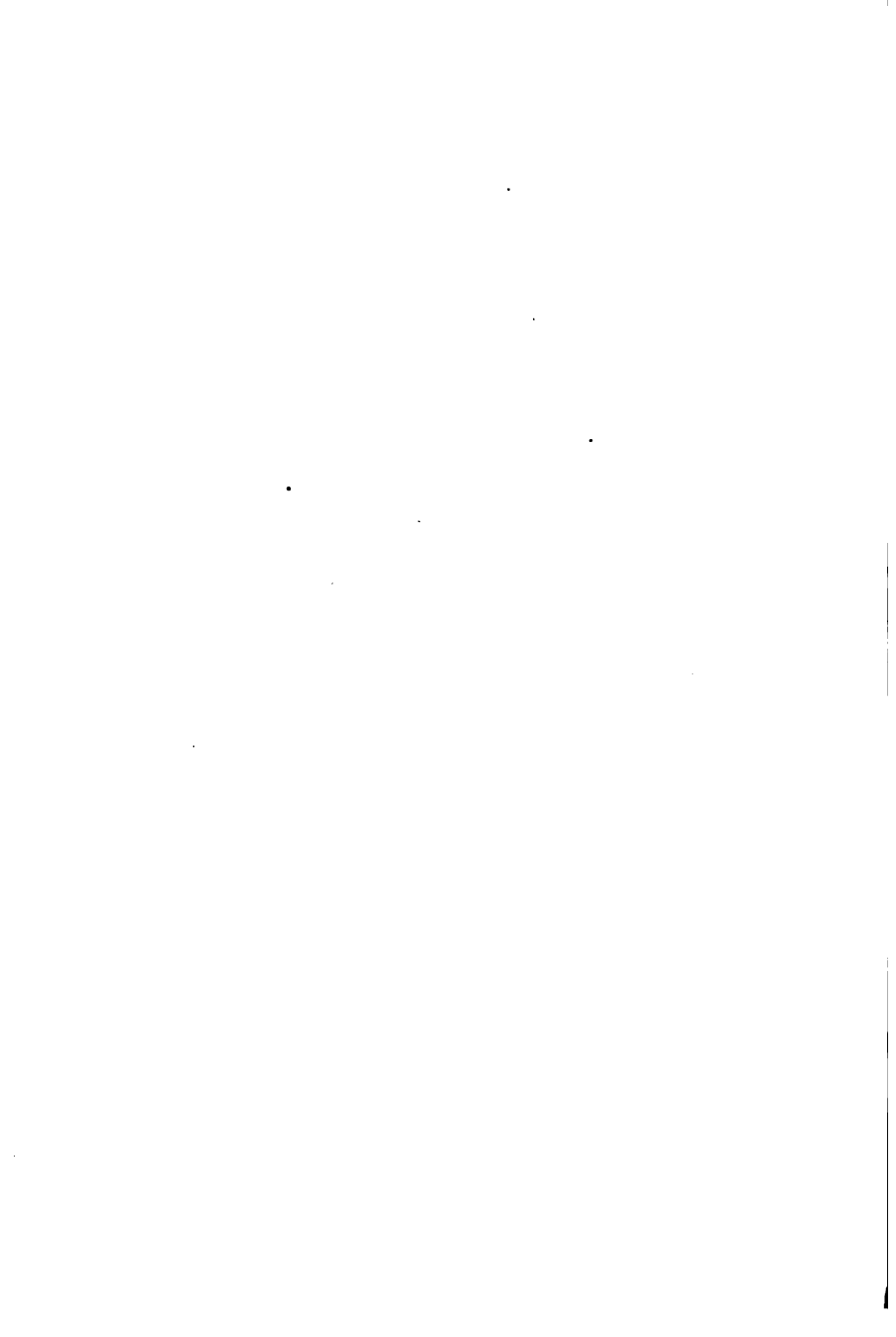




PART II.

The Berries
At the Sea-Side.







CHAPTER I.

THE JOURNEY.

SHOUTS of joy were heard from the garden of the Berries' house, the boys flinging up their caps and jumping wildly over the flower-beds, the girls clapping their hands and dancing happily round them, the little toddles rolling on the lawn in ecstasy, and all because mother had said, just as they were leaving the breakfast-table :

"Children, we think of going to Rivermouth for your holidays, which begin next week."

"How jolly! bathing, boating, and bicycling," cried the boys.

"How perfectly lovely! to scramble about the rocks and find sea-weeds and sea-anemones!" exclaimed the girls.

"Sibbie, what is de sea like?" asked Dollie, who had never seen it in her remembrance.

"Oh!" said her sister, "it is the most glorious thing; it is all blue water as far as you can see; it sparkles in the sun, and foams like snow surging up on it, and always and for ever it keeps on moving, moving." When Sibyl got enthusiastic her eyes grew large, and she looked like an inspired Sibyl.

"Where does it move, Sibbie? if we stop here will it come this way?"

"Oh, it does not go anywhere, it stops in one place," replied her sister, coming down from the clouds.

"What a stupid sea to be always moving and never doing on," cried Dollie with great scorn, and she planted her little feet firm, and began bending about, to try that kind of motion, till she tumbled down.

"I sudn't like dat kind of moving," she said, as she picked herself up and trotted away.

"You will like the sea, though," said Elsie; "you can dig holes in the sand, and make houses, and—and all sorts of nice things."

Lollie turned up her little nose at this, and shaking her head, replied:

"No, no, nurse won't let us play in the dirt,—no fear of that."

"Ah! but she will allow you to do so there, because all the little girls and boys do the same; the sand is clean, you know."

"Oh! what fun—what fun to dig holes in the ground and nurse not to scold!" and the two tiny mites again rolled over each other in the ecstasy of their joy.

Time seemed to creep for all the Berries, till the morning dawned on which they were to start. Mrs. Berrie and nurse flattered themselves that they had packed so well that there would be no tiresome little hand-parcels; but what was their horror when all the children appeared ready to start, and so covered with packages, baskets, &c., that they looked like walking merchandise.

Sibyl had her favourite books, work-baskets, and a huge package, which turned out to be blotting-paper and boards for drying sea-weeds.

Elsie and Minna had two baskets each, a doll's trunk, and the very biggest book the juvenile library contained, because, they said, "If we take little story books we should want a dozen."

As for Lollie and Dollie, they toddled about under such a heap of tin-buckets, spades, dolls, little baskets filled with apples, cakes, and toys, which were continually rolling about, that it was almost impossible to find the children beneath them all.

The proposals to leave some of the precious articles behind produced doleful wails, and each one

declared she could not get on at all if even the smallest thing were taken away.

So the walking bundles found their way to the station, and were helped into the train by two guards and a porter, one of whom alarmed the tiny ones by asking seriously if they had taken tickets for the dolls.

They had a three hours' journey, during which they made four separate meals on cakes, apples, and sandwiches, and then arrived at Rivermouth.

"Where is de sea, I don't see any water?" cried Dollie, as she and her parcels were put down on the platform of the station.

"Wait a little, you will soon see," answered her sister, who begged that the cab might be stopped when they reached the esplanade, that she might have the pleasure of seeing their first impressions.

This was done, and Sibyl got out with the two little ones, leading them to the edge of the walk, where they could look down on the dashing waters, for it was high tide, and the surf came up to the wall. Sibyl waited in silent anticipation of their wonder and admiration, but Dollie only pulled a long face of disappointment, crying:

"Is dat all—soap-suds?" and with the greatest contempt she turned away and got into the carriage with her dolls again.

Lollie looked farther, and as she took in the vast expanse of sea her eyes grew rounder and rounder, as she exclaimed :

“What a lot of water ! I wonder how many minnows there are in all that ; more than Fweddie could catch with a cwooked pin, I expect.”



Sibyl laughed.

“What a big water-fall it must make out there, where it wolls off the edge of the world,” added Lollie, pointing to the horizon, where the sea seems to round off downwards.

“I am dreadfully disappointed,” sighed Sibyl as she took her place in the cab again. “I have looked

forward for a week to the children's wonder and delight, and they just think nothing of it."

But if they were not enthusiastic about the beauties of nature, they went into ecstasies over the new house, and especially the nursery, which had a large bay-window overlooking the sea.

"Just look at the two dear little white beds, and a new bath," cried Lollie.

"And a beautiful 'ittle chair, just big enough for me," exclaimed Dollie, seating herself. "And a table wif a 'ittle drawer in it, to put our very own play-fings in," she added, getting up again and running to the table.

"Here's a cupboard to put Sarah in when she is naughty," cried Lollie. "Come here, Sarah, what are you lying on the floor on your face for, that is vewy naughty, you know. I shall lock you up directly, miss," and the poor helpless doll was put into the punishment-cupboard without loss of time.

The next morning they awoke to fresh delights. Oh! the happiness of running barefoot on the beach, and digging in the yellow sands! what beautiful forts the boys made for them, and what cannons they fired off with gun-caps! and how funny it was to see Dollie, who always ran away after the shot was fired and tumbled head foremost over the first sand-heap!

Then the bathing! What a delightful plan papa had invented to avoid the horrors of those close bathing-machines. Hubert had brought two tents which belonged to the garden of their country house, and every morning they set these up on the sands of a quiet little cove about a mile away, so that Mr. Berrie could give the girls their swimming lessons in quiet.

After a time a trio of girlish figures would come out of one tent, clad in pretty costumes of red flannel, with white sailor collars and trimming; and from the other certain strange creatures in striped jerseys, which looked like zebras, rushed out and plunged splashing into the waves.

"Come along, lobsters," they cried, as the girls, in red, ran daintily over the sands with their bare feet.

The swimming lessons were found so delightful, and the girls learned so well, that in a week's time they were able to go out a long way from shore.

Then Hubert and Harry invented a raft, like those which their father told them were used in the bathing establishments in Italy, and with this they took the girls out still farther, and Mr. Berrie taught them to dive from it. Sibyl soon became a first-rate and graceful diver; but Elsie and Minna could never get up courage enough to plunge head foremost, and

merely splashed in, generally getting overturned on their backs, and coming up again with great struggles and screams.

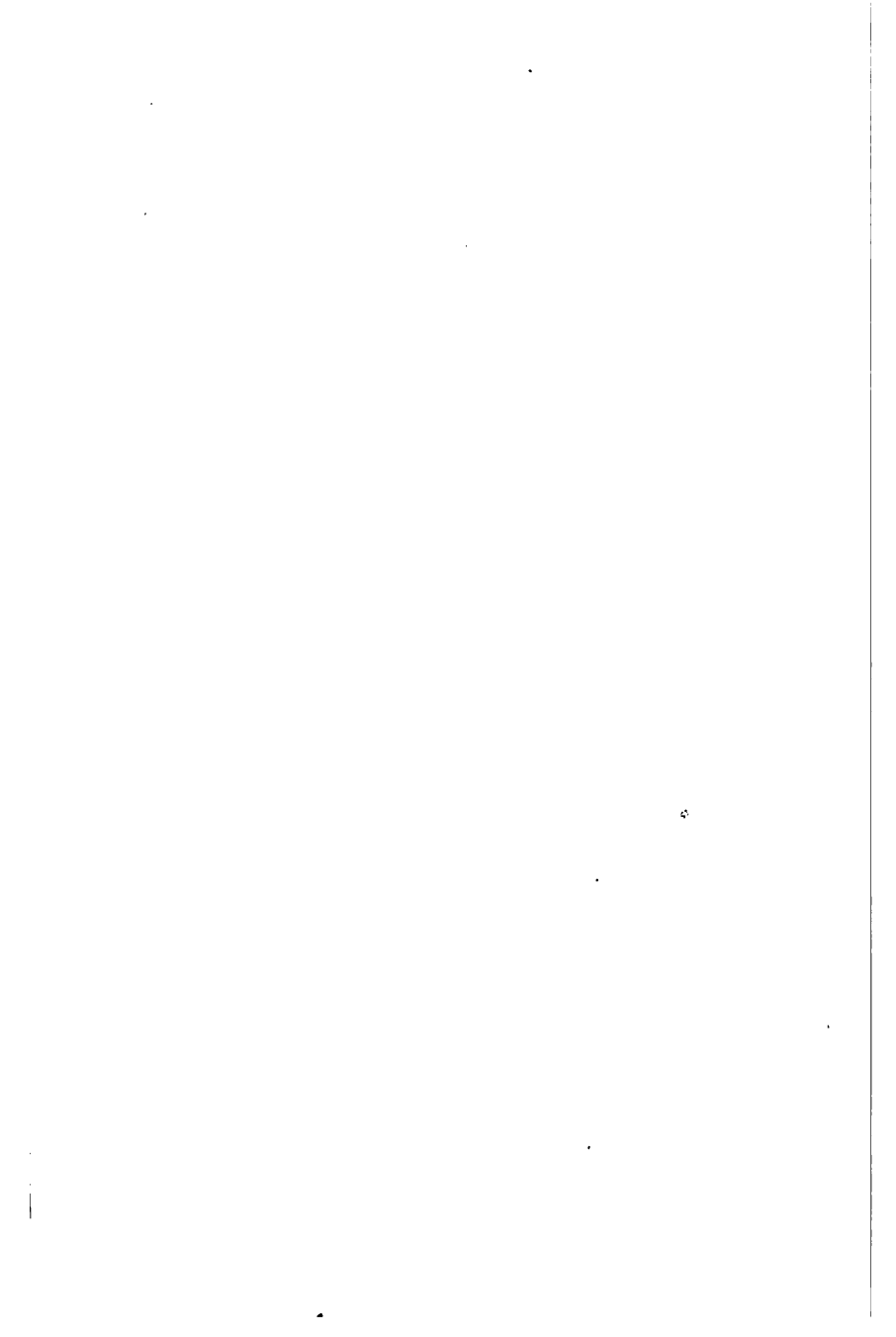
The two tiny ones were dressed in suits of blue flannel, and allowed to roll in and out of the surf, great excitement being caused when a wave overtook them unexpectedly. Dollie would calmly sit down on the sands and let the surf wash up around her; but Lollie was more daring, and played at chasing the wave as it drew back, and then running with a splash when an oncoming wave chased her.

When nurse thought they had had enough of this kind of play, the bath ended as it began, with a dip in the arms of one of the elders, and the two little ones were dressed by nurse in the tent, and allowed to play on the sands till the party went home to lunch.

The tents had been placed under the charge of a fisherman, whose house was near this retired cove. He put them up every morning, and when the daily baths were over, he took them down, and rolling up the canvas, carried them to his house. Every one agreed that it was a much more delightful plan than the close bathing-machines.



By the Seashore.





CHAPTER II.

ADVENTURES.



NE day the whole party, including nurse and the two little girls, started for the bathing-cove, where they intended to spend the whole day, taking their lunch with them to eat in the tents. The elders found the babies, who would follow them in a walk up the coast to the rocks, rather a drawback to their

amusements, for their little legs were not used to jumping on the rocks, and were constantly leading them into danger.

First Dollie, having put her foot on a slippery sea-weed, tumbled splash into a watery hole, and had to be fished up by Minna, crying :

“ Why did de nassy water det into the hole where I felled down ? It’s all wet, de nassy water. Ugh ! an’ it’s dot a nassy taste, like my brof (broth) when cook puts too much salt in it. Oh-h ! I don’t like de wet water.”

Then Lollie espied a crimson object fluttering on a rock, and scrambling off towards it, exclaimed :

“ Oh, mamie, here is a most beautiful wed flower, as wed as a wose, do come and pick—” but before Mrs. Berrie could reach her, Lollie had put her little grasping fingers on the flower, and shrieks followed. “ Oh, mamie, the flower is alive, and it’s eating me ! —Oh, mamie, come quick ! ”

She had put her finger in the centre of a beautiful sea-anemone, and it had closed round it.

After that the little ones returned more content to the care of nurse on the sands by the tents, and the elders continued their walk. Sibyl was making a collection of sea-weeds, and the girls soon had their baskets full of specimens ; the boys gave their atten-

tion to crab-catching, limpet-picking, and did not even despise perriwinkles.

Mr. and Mrs. Berrie were the first to tire of this uneven walking, and sat themselves to rest on a large smooth rock, from which they could feast their eyes on the wide rolling sea, dotted with white sails, and the blue sky flecked with white seagulls wheeling gracefully around.

"Come with me, Elsie," said Freddie, "and let us find some crabs for tea. Bring your basket, for I have nothing to put them in."

They jumped from crag to crag for some time, till Freddie saw a likely pool, when he put in his spud, and after poking for some time, cried, "Hi! there is a fine fellow. Come out, Mr. Crab," and he poked harder than ever.

The crab not liking this treatment, soon after judged it better to come to light, which he did in a very sidelong fashion; but he disappeared again instantly under a heap of sea-weed.

"Don't think you are going to escape me like that. I know the hole you sidled into," exclaimed Freddie, making a grab at the weeds.

The crab might have been making the same remark, and what is more, he acted up to it. Freddie did not escape him, for he drew back his hand with

the crab hanging to it, and began shrieking and wringing his hands so furiously that Elsie came running up in a fright.

"What is it, Freddie?—oh, what is the matter?"

"Can't you see what's the matter?" he retorted rather savagely, flourishing the crab close up to her nose. "Well, don't stand there staring, goosey, can you not help me off with the creature? if you only knew how it bites."

This must have been a fairy wish of Freddie's, for no sooner had Elsie made a great effort to conquer her fears, and bravely clutched at the crab to pull it away, than she found how much it could bite, for the other claw caught her finger in a cruel vice. No doubt, if a crab is squeezing hard with one claw, it likes to make things equal by also squeezing with the other.

Shriek after shriek rent the air, and instead of one dancing figure, there were two. The worst of it was that they did not wring their hands in time, and every pull one of them gave hurt the other all the more.

"Oh, Freddie, it hurts me so," wailed Elsie.

"As if I did not know that, and it has been pinching me like St. Dunstan's tongs for ever so long."

"But I cannot bear it,—do pull hard, Freddie, perhaps he will come off then."

Freddie pulled, but the effort only increased Elsie's cries, for the harder they pulled the firmer it squeezed. The tears began to roll down the little girl's cheeks in agony.

"And the others are all out of sight," she sobbed.

"If you can do nothing but cry, I wish you had not come. Hi, Hubert, Hubert, help!" and Freddie set up a very loud call. "The only thing is to knock him off hard against a rock," said the boy, as no answer came to his shout.

"Oh, I can't, it will hurt so. Oh! what ever shall we do, I cannot bear it."

"Then, if you cannot bear it, the only thing is to get rid of it,—come now, up with your hand when I do. I'll give him a whack," and he seized Elsie's hand, and uplifting it with his own, brought both down with a crash on the stone, which gave such a shock to the crab that it forthwith fell on its back upon the rock.

"Hallo! what are you two howling for and dancing about like dervishes?" inquired Harry, coming up at the moment.

"You would howl too if you had a crab on your finger, my boy," retorted Freddie. "Talk about a fight at school, a claw squeezing a fellow like that is a jolly sight worse than a black eye, I can tell you."

By this time the others had joined them, and Sibyl began to bind up the wounds in doctorly style with pocket-handkerchiefs.

"That was a binding link between brother and sister which one could do very well without," laughed Hubert, when he heard the story.

"It was just like a girl's foolishness for Elsie to come and poke her fingers into his claws too," growled Freddie, whose temper had not yet recovered after the pain.

"Now I do think that very unkind, Fred, when I was only trying to release you."

"Old boy," said Hubert, in his most fatherly tone, "you should not have made a crabbed speech even with a crab for subject."

"Laugh, everybody," cried Harry, "Hubert has made a pun, and will be crabbed himself if we don't see it."

"I do not think such a pinch is a joking matter, —I shall not laugh," muttered Freddie, aggrieved.

"Oh, that is of no consequence, Hubert can always bring forth a joke at a pinch," said the irrepressible Harry.

On which Hubert retorted: "And give a pinch for a bad joke too," as he punished his brother by that means.

Sibyl the peace-maker thought it was time to change the conversation, so while the two wounded ones returned to tell their parents of their adventure, she proposed a climb on the cliff to seek for samphire, for she said :

“Cook wants some for pickling.”

“Agreed,” said the two boys and Minna, so the four started off together.

The cliffs in this part of the coast were of white limestone, streaked here and there with red and grey, as the water had carried down the drainings of the gravel and soil from above. They were rugged and steep, with here and there little paths winding precipitously amidst the projections. One of these paths attracted the young people, and they began to go up. There were several tufts of samphire within easy reach, but always better ones to be seen farther above them, so that they were drawn higher and higher without noticing the progress they made.

“I have always read about the perils of the samphire-gatherers,” said Harry, “but I don’t see anything very perilous in this.”

“I dare say that was only in one of Miss Edgeworth’s stories, her children never seem to know anything,” replied Minna, who as a modern reader

was very severe on the books which pleased her grandmothers.

"No, it is a much better author—Shakespeare speaks of the samphire-gatherers hanging on the perilous cliff," said Hubert; "but now here is a bad place, I think you girls had better go back," and he stopped where the path had been worn away to a mere three inches of ledge between one projection and another.

Harry, who was very reckless and daring, exclaimed: "Do you call this dangerous? it is a mere nothing. Look here," and he sprang across the narrow bit at a bound, and standing on the root of a shrub, held out his hands to the girls. Minna, who was like a gazelle in climbing, followed him, and Hubert, still half protesting, helped Sibyl to cross too. After that they went on higher, now holding on by stones and bushes, then springing from tuft to tuft of long sea-grass, here swinging round a projecting boulder, there walking along narrow paths, always looking up and never down, till at last they reached a narrow ledge up very high, and found their progress stopped by a great wall of cliff, so that they could go no farther.

"We *must* go back now," said Hubert; but when the girls turned round they became suddenly pale

with alarm to find themselves standing on a tiny path two feet wide, literally on the face of a cliff, and so high that they seemed hanging in mid-air, and turned giddy with the thought.

"I never can go down again," exclaimed Sibyl, "I am sure the first step would send me rolling headlong."

"We never can have come up there," added Minna, "why, there does not seem foothold for a bird."

"It does look rather awful, I must say," assented Hubert. "I never before realized how much more easy it is to climb up than down."

"And how much more certain you are to fall headlong when you are not climbing with your face set upwards," added Sibyl, moralizing.

"Meanwhile, what are we to do?" and they glanced from one to the other in dismay.

"Just look how small uncle and aunt appear down on that rock. Hi! Uncle Herbert."

"Hush!" implored Sibyl, "pray do not call their attention, it would alarm them so to see us up here. Oh! how foolish we were to come."

"We must look like a row of puffins from below," added Minna; "but oh! I feel so giddy."

"As you are not made on the principle of a

puffin's egg, warranted not to roll off a ledge, you had better sit down," and Hubert gently placed her beside him, telling her to look at the cliff and not at the landscape.

"Study geology, Min," said Harry, "and find out how many microscopic fossils that square foot of limestone contains."

Just then a coast-guardsman, passing by in his beat on the top of the cliff, heard their voices, and peered over, exclaiming :

"Bless my stars, young ladies and young gentlemen, what are ye a-doin' of down there?"

"Up here, you mean," replied Hubert; "we have reached so far, but can't get on, and it looks more dangerous to go down."

"Dangerous! I should think so. Why, I wouldn't scale this 'ere cliff myself, and I've a-ben about this coast, man an' boy, for forty year near-about. Don't ye attempt to go down again, you be so more likely to slip than you be in comin' up."

"What are we to do, then?" asked Harry, "we can climb like goats in a general way, but this ten foot of cliff is a little too much."

"I tell you what, Hal, I'll give you a back, and let the man help you up, then you and he can hoist up the girls; I'll assist them from below."

"All right," cried Harry, "that's a bright idea. Hold hard, Mr. Coastguard, I'm coming."

The man looked alarmed, but he lay full length on the grass at the top of the cliff, and put his two arms over. Harry sprang on his brother's back, and catching at the hands, swung himself up very easily. The two girls had hidden their eyes, till he gave a shout of:

"All right, I'm up; now, girls, it is your turn."

"Oh, I cannot," sighed Sibyl. "I am not a boy, and even if I were, the idea of playing leap-frog on a precipice is awful; we must give it up," and she looked very despondent.

"Come, Sibyl," said Hubert, placing himself as a support against the rock; but his cousin drew back blushing, and said she really could not.

"Don't let any girl's shyness put your life in danger, Sibbie, dear; remember this is your only chance, unless you risk sliding down to the bottom. 'Tis no play, you know,—we are in a serious fix." Sibyl shivered, and with downcast eyes said she would try.

"You go first, Sibyl," said Minna, "because I can jump up without help." So Minna helped her cousin to mount on her living pedestal, Hubert standing as firm as a young Hercules beneath the

weight, although his heart was beating in terror, as he thought :

“Suppose she were to slip,—how terrible.”

However, with her courage wrought up by dire necessity, Sibyl stretched up her hands, feeling and clutching the stones in the cliff, till the two strong hands from above caught hold of her. For one moment she hung a dead weight, and cried :

“I don’t know how to climb,—oh ! I am falling ;” but Hubert helped her to place her feet against the rock, and she was soon safely drawn over the edge, and lying all trembling on the grass at the top.

Minna, who was a good climber, was soon on the top. And then came a serious question. How was Hubert to reach the saving hands ? there was no one to “make a back” for him, and with all his stretching upwards he was a foot or two below their grasp.

“I shall have to go and get a rope,” said the coast-guardsmen ; “but the station is a mile away, and I’m afeard he’ll get giddy stoppin’ so long upon that bit of a ledge,—why, there’s hardly room for a sea-gull to rest himself.”

Here a bright thought struck Sibyl, who by this time was trembling more for her cousin’s danger than for her own, which was past.

"Let us tie our sashes together for him, Minna," she said with pale lips.

The girls nervously pulled off their wide sashes, which were made of soft red silk, and began with shaking hands to tie them together.

"That knot won't hold,—here, let me splice them for ye. There, that's all taut, that will bear him, I'll lay a penny," said the sailor, as he tried its strength across his knees. Then winding one end tightly round his arm, and both he and Harry grasping it firmly, he let it hang down till Hubert could take hold of the end and pull himself up. Three pallid faces and a brown set countenance greeted him as he appeared above. Minna flung her arms round his neck, and began to cry for the first time. Sibyl sank on the ground again and could not say a word. Harry tried to make a joke, but the words died on his lips, for he saw something so solemn in his brother's face as he turned away, after grasping the man's hand.

"Well, young sirs," said the sailor, breaking the silence, "I hope you won't bring your young ladies into such danger as this any more. Who knows what might have happened if I hadn't been on the spot?" Saying this he saluted, and was going away, but the boys ran and caught both his hands.

"Don't go yet," said Hubert, "we have not thanked you. Do you know you have saved the girls' lives?"

"Yes, that he has," added Harry; "we might have got out of the fix, but I don't know what we should have done with the girls without you."

"What is your name?" asked Hubert.

"Henry Reeves, at your service, sir."

"Where do you live?"

"Down at the coast-guard station, sir; mine is the third cottage in the row, sir, the third from the captain's house."

"I will remember," replied Hubert, as he again shook the man's hand.

Sibyl and Minna, having a little recovered their nerves, also came to thank him and shake hands, after which he picked up his spy-glass, which had been left on the ground, and marched along the edge of the cliff, upright and stiff as a man 'on duty' ought to be. There was something very soft at his heart though, as he thought of the danger those pretty young girls had been exposed to.





CHAPTER III.

PICNIC TEA.



“HOW are we to get down again to the beach? Mother and father will be anxious about us,” said Sibyl, as they watched their rescuer out of sight.

“Oh, there is a good path here, which leads round to the

shore where the cliff is low.”

Soberly and quietly the four walked on down the little path through the short grass. Master Harry, however, soon found the silence oppressive, and began to chase butterflies on the very edge of the cliff, till Sibyl (whose nerves had not yet got over the shock) begged him to come away.

"I suppose we shall have no more fun now, the girls will see danger in everything. Well, if we *were* to have a sea-side adventure, I am glad it was not being caught in a bay by the tide, that is become too common."

"It seems to me we have had more than our share of adventure to-day," said Minna.

"Oh, if you never have anything worse than this you will live to be a hundred without any broken bones."

"First Dollie fell into a pool," continued Minna, counting on her fingers.

"You don't call that an adventure, I hope," retorted Harry; "why, she tumbles down even on a carpet about a dozen times a day. She uses her legs in such a very sketchy manner, when they go up you never know where they will come down."

"Then Lollie and the anemone."

"That is what every child does once in its life, if not oftener. Come, Minna, your list of adventures is looking rather small."

"Then Freddie and Elsie and the crab."

"More fools were they to hunt crabs without learning how to take hold of them. I'm jolly sure a crab wouldn't catch me;" Harry said this in a very disdainful tone.

Then he set off running as fast as he could in a sidelong fashion, like a crab, to the beach, where his uncle and aunt, who had just begun to miss the young people, were standing on their rock glancing round the coast.

"Where have you all been, Harry, my boy?" asked Mr. Berrie.

"Performing feats of valour and scaling a cliff," answered he with a careless air.

"And the girls?" said Mrs. Berrie.

"Oh, they have been scaling a cliff too. If you had looked up there" (pointing to the high part) "a quarter of an hour ago, you would have seen us all like a row of puffins on a ledge, and wishing we were more like them, so that we could have flown away. It isn't a cram, I assure you," added Harry, seeing how disbelieving his uncle and aunt looked.

Mrs. Berrie soon saw that the case had been a serious one, by the way Sibyl and Minna flew into her arms, half-sobbing: "Oh, mamie, we were so frightened."

Mr. Berrie glanced at Hubert as if to call him to account for leading the younger ones into danger.

"I assure you, Uncle Herbert, we had none of us any idea how high we had climbed till we were stopped by that perpendicular cliff and looked back."

"H'm, looking back is sometimes a danger and sometimes a safeguard; it depends on the path one takes," said Mr. Berrie. "One who leads others less capable than himself ought to look back for their sakes."

"I understand you, uncle," replied Hubert, "and will not be rash in future."

Mrs. Berrie pressed his hand and said: "Thank God you have brought them safely home to me, my boy."

Hubert's honest eyes looked moist; he always felt that his aunt understood him. Then she turned and listened to Sibyl's account of the coast-guardsmen, and promised to call at the station and thank him on the way home.

Just then a loud shout was heard from nurse and the children calling them back to the tent, for tea was ready. Freddie had made a fire of dry weeds and driftwood, and Elsie was poking it with a long stick to make the kettle boil on its tripod in the midst. Freddie was now occupied by trying to carve a boat out of driftwood with a big table-knife, and found the task rather difficult.

Nurse and the two little ones were employed laying the table-cloth on the smooth sands, and the tiny mites found it great fun to be able to crawl on the table and peep into a pot of jam.

A very merry meal followed, and past dangers did not interfere with the power of enjoying cake and jam. Harry began to tease Freddie about the crab, and divers doggerel rhymes were made in this style :

“There was a brave boy by the sea,
Who wanted some shell-fish for tea,
He caught a fine crab,
But in making a grab,
It chanced that the crab did catch *he*.”

The comical air with which Harry finished up with this bit of bad grammar made everybody laugh ; and Dolly was so amused that she laughed till she rolled over with her hand in the jam-pot, on which Lollie jumped up to set her right again, and upset the salt over the plum-cake ; in catching the cake away Elsie overturned the milk-jug, on which Hubert cried : “ Hold hard there, somebody, let us break the chain of accidents before everything is ruined.”

Then Harry began asking a riddle.

“What is that which nobody has ever seen before?”

“A tail, to be sure,” retorted Hubert.

“I don’t see the joke of that ; there are plenty of tails to be seen,” said Sibyl.

“Then you are very obtuse. A tail is always seen behind, is it not ?” replied Hubert.

"Not bad, but that is not my riddle," said Harry.
"The answer is a picnic tea without an upset."

"Oh, I thought you were asking riddles. I call that asserting a fact," and Hubert's matter-of-fact nose went up in the air with disdain.

"The tide is coming in," said Mr. Berrie, as a lapping of water was heard creeping up very near them; "it is time to go home. Hubert, will you let the fisherman know that he may take away the tents?"

"Oh, is the day over!" sighed several voices.
"What a nice day it has been!"

Then followed a general packing up of tea-things and eatables, and the boys helped to demolish the tent.





CHAPTER IV.

THE COAST-GUARD STATION.



ON the way home they called at the coast-guard station, a collection of little black cabins all covered with glistening tar ; there were twelve in a row, each with a neat garden in front. At the end was a larger house with bay - windows, but equally black and shining, and its garden, though larger, was kept in a state of incredible neatness, with its smooth paths of shingle.

“It really looks as though the captain commanded the pebbles as well as the men,” said Hubert, “there is not one out of place.”

The children, whom a garden always put into lively spirits, began to rush about the paths.

"Oh! what dear, pretty 'ittle pafs," cried Dollie, running full speed round the flower-beds, with Lollie following, and making the loose pebbles fly as they scampered.

Just then a tall stiff man in a nautical dress came forward, and drawing himself up in front of the party, demanded what they wished, adding: "I am Captain Rammer, if you want me."

"I feel just as if somebody had given us a challenge," whispered Sibyl to Elsie as they shrunk behind their parents out of the stern gaze.

"We are seeking one of your men, named Henry Reeves," replied Mr. Berrie.

The captain blew a whistle, and on the instant a man in a sailor hat started as if he had been shot out of the first house; he drew himself up in front of the captain and saluted.

"Henry Reeves off duty?" asked the captain in his stiffest tones.

"No, sir, he's out on the eastward beat; his time is up in five minutes, sir," and the man looked at a very large watch, which was tucked in some mysterious place in his trousers belt.

"If you will wait five minutes, sir, the man you

ask for will be here," said the officer to Mr. Berrie.

Mr. Berrie bowed and the captain bowed. Then he glanced his stern eyes round his garden and saw the holes made in the shingle by the children's scampering little feet, so he whistled four times, solemnly. Out started a man from the fourth house, and drawing his legs together in the first position, saluted his superior officer.

Minna fairly laughed. "I believe they are all machines," she remarked to Elsie; but Elsie looked frightened, and said: "Don't let him hear you, he is an awful man. I feel as if he would turn me into a machine too if he were angry."

"Bring a rake, Jones, and smooth over these paths," commanded the captain.

The man brought a fine rake and began to smooth the shingle wherever the children had been running. Nurse took the hint and went away with her youngest charges.

"This isn't a place for children," she muttered. "As if their blessed little legs would have hurt his pebbles."

"Discipline and order are the chief duties of a coast-guard officer," said the captain to Mr. Berrie. "I have no doubt you find the same qualities needful for governing your young people."

"I like to leave them free action as much as is consistent with obedience; in private life too much restraint galls."

"Freedom of action, sir, is a great mistake. If you want to keep a man to his duty, bind him, sir, bind him. Nothing is to be done without discipline." Then, as a second thought, he asked: "Would your young people like to see the armoury?"

"Very much, if you please," said the boys, and they followed him to a room adjoining his own house.

Here, all in the most perfect order, were rows of guns and pistols, files of polished oars, one or two small cannon, and a case of specimens of all kinds of ammunition. Everything was in the most perfect order. The captain pointed to several old-fashioned guns, all beautifully polished however, and fixed on hooks in the wall, saying:

"Those are the old arquebusses used by the excise-officers in the days of Queen Anne. And those great cutlasses were captured from French smugglers in the time of George the Third."

"And those horse-pistols?" asked Hubert, pointing to some huge things.

"They were used by our men about the beginning of this century."

"And those are, I suppose, the weapons you

use now?" asked Harry, pointing to a row of long rifles.

"No, those are old ramrod guns; we use these breech-loaders now."

"It is a good thing that he can't swallow any more ramrods; he seems to have done a good deal of it in his time," remarked Harry in an aside to his brother, who frowned at him for his daring.

Here Freddie, who had been much interested, stepped up to the captain, and looking innocently up into his face, asked in a high voice, "How many men have you killed, sir?"

The captain glared as if he would eat the little boy; but seeing the innocent inquiring gaze, he smiled grimly, and said, "Not many, my boy, since I retired into this amphibious life. I have served my country in the Mediterranean in my young days, when I was aboard the 'Hercules.'"

"If you never kill anybody, I wonder why you keep such a lot of guns," said Freddie, still puzzled.

"Henry Reeves is returned, sir," said a man, entering and saluting.

Thanking the captain, and taking care to step softly over his shingle paths, the Berries withdrew, and went to No. 3 cottage, where the children's friend stood at the door. He looked a little shy

as they all rushed up, and taking his hand, introduced him to Mr. and Mrs. Berrie, and he quite blushed with shyness when Mrs. Berrie thanked him in her sweetest, gentlest way.

"I did nothin' but my duty, ma'am; but I must say the young people didn't ought to ha' been up there."

By this time the girls had got into the house, where they espied some pretty little children. Elsie seized upon one curly-headed girl, for she was always a baby worshipper. Sibyl made friends with Reeve's wife by admiring the youngest girl in her arms, and then saw a boy of about ten years old sitting in a corner and rubbing his eyes.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

He looked up, and then began to rub his eyes more than ever.

"Come, Bobby, tell the little lady what's the matter," said his mother.

"The capting won't let me cut chips in the garden, and he won't let me cut 'em in the house neither," wailed Bobby, feeling there was sympathy in his listeners.

"But why do you want to cut chips?" asked Mrs. Berrie, who had entered.

"Because I do like to," said Bobby defiantly.

"Bobby, my dear, speak up pretty to the lady,"

interposed his mother, cuddling up closer the smallest baby. "Tell the lady you do cut out pretty things for mother," and she stooped to a cupboard in the dresser and took out a salt-box, very nicely carved in wood, with a fish on the cover.

Then the little curly-haired girl got down out of Elsie's arms, and went to her special corner, and trotted out with a doll in her arms. "Bobby did make my dolly," she lisped, thrusting it into Elsie's hands. It was carved in wood, and was really not a bad imitation of a human face.

"We don't know what to do with Bobby," sighed the mother; "he frets so agen the captain's strictness, and says nothing will ever make him become a sailor. Well, 'tis rather hard to keep young children from runnin' about; they will play with the shingle and leave their toys about."

Sibyl drew her father aside, and said, "Papa, dear, don't you think we could find some carpenter near us who wants a boy? then we could see Bobby sometimes and be kind to him."

And Minna added, "Oh! do try, Uncle Herbert. I will write and ask papa to help to pay his expenses. I am sure he will,—think what his father did for us."

"We will do nothing rashly, my darlings; to-morrow we will perhaps decide. Besides, I think

the boy wants something better than common carpentering."

After again thanking Reeves they went home to their lodgings on the esplanade.

The next morning at breakfast Sibyl's first question was, "Have you decided, papa?"

"Decided what, my dear?"

"How you are going to release Bobby from the ogre?"

"I think an ogre of tidiness is worse than a devouring ogre," put in Harry.

"Ah! I wish I could get the same results as he does with less severity," sighed Mrs. Berrie, who very often had to combat the demon of untidiness in the children, who were all more ready to take out books and playthings than to put them away again.

"But we are wandering from Sibyl's question," said Minna, who was blushing guiltily, for her lesson books and dolls' work had been turned out of the drawing-room that very morning.

"I think I have a plan for him, if his father will agree to it. Mr. Grinling, the wood-carver, would be very willing to take a promising apprentice; but Bobby must go to school for a year or two first."

"And will you pay for it, papie dear?"

"Yes; I think I could place him at the Middle

School at Rivermouth, then he would still be with his mother out of hours. Then when he is old enough we will apprentice him to Mr. Grinling, and make an artist of him."

"Oh, you dear papa, how good you are!" cried the girls, and a general rush was made to embrace him, an attack which he bore with patience.

Everybody wanted to go to the coast-guard station and be the bearer of the good news; but Mr. Berrie decided that he would himself see Reeves and talk over the matter with him. The three girls were allowed to accompany him, much to their delight, and a great pleasure they had in seeing the gratitude of Reeves and his wife, and the happiness of Bobby, who saw a glorious life opening out before him.

"So our cliffing adventure has brought good to some one after all," sighed Sibyl with gratification as they turned away.

"Don't let that be any excuse for your heedlessness in running into danger," replied her father seriously. "The truth that God by His goodness can turn our errors into blessings does not take away the fault on our side, you know."

"No, papa; we will remember," said the girls softly, and for a little time they walked in silence.



CHAPTER V.

THE SAND FORTS.



"I SAY, Hu, there are a lot of our fellows a little higher up the beach making a jolly fort, let's come and join them," cried Harry, rushing up to his brother, who lay full length on the sands reading, 'A Journey to the Centre of the Earth.'

"Yes, come along, Cousin Hubert," exclaimed Freddie; "there

are Mason and Roberts and Sidling and Thompson, and ever so many more from our school."

"There are a lot of the Rivermouth boys hanging about too, perhaps we might challenge them to a battle," added Harry.

Away went the book, which Hubert flung into

nurse's lap to be taken care of as he passed her on the sands, and the three boys went to join the fort-makers.

"Hullo, you Berries! we didn't know you were in Rivermouth till this morning. Look, is not this a jolly fort?" cried one of the youths.

"Fine," said Hubert, laconically, as he set to work with vigour in heaping up sand.

"'Tis not big enough though, if you really want to defend it; we are a large garrison now you three have come," said a tall fair boy named Sidling.

"Let us enlarge it then. Who is chief engineer?"

"Oh, Roberts made the plan; but we haven't elected a captain yet."

"I vote for Berrie, major," said Mason, a stout boy of about Harry's age.

"So do I," said Thompson.

"I vote for Sidling," laughed that ambitious person himself.

"There's nobody to propose you, and nobody to second you. Berrie is out and out the best captain, he never bullies a fellow," said some of the others, and Sidling had to retire from the competition.

"I say," whispered Harry loudly to Mason, "what are all those fellows standing staring about for? Who are they?"

"Oh, they are Rivermouth boys, I believe," replied Mason, looking superciliously at a group of boys who were watching the fort-builders.

"I say," said Harry again, "a fort is no fun without an enemy,—let's get up a war with them, eh?"

"I don't mind if we do. You go at them, I'll second you."

Harry walked in an unconcerned manner round to the group in question, and said in a casual way, "Ah! you fellows are taking a few hints in fort-building, I suppose?"

The eldest, who was a rough-looking boy of about fifteen, retorted with a flush:

"I dare say we know how to build a fort as well as you."

"Why don't you do it then, instead of standing about in our way?"

"You see, we might have taken you in as under-builders, only we have our staff complete," said Mason, putting his brand into the fire. "We are all fellows of one school, the Emerton Grammar School."

"And we are all fellows of the Rivermouth Middle School, and if you give us any more of your cheek, we'll build a bigger fort and give you a jolly good licking," exclaimed the big boy, his combativeness rising.

This was just what Harry wanted, his eyes twinkled as he called out: "I say, Captain, these fellows are challenging us to a war—shall we fight them?"

"Who are they?" asked Hubert, coming up.

"We are as good as you any day, and won't stand any of your insolence."

"Come along then. We'll give you an hour to build your fort, and mind, our rules are sand-balls with no stones in them."

"Do you take us for sneaks!" cried the big boy angrily, as he withdrew with his regiment to begin building operations.

The Rivermouth party at first consisted of six boys; but as they worked recruits poured in from all quarters, till the Emerton camp was as one to five.

A little fellow who was too lame to work much, took on himself the office of recruiting-sergeant, and waylaid every Rivermouth boy who passed; even a baker's boy set down his basket and began making sand-balls, and a donkey boy left his donkey to go to the stand alone while he helped to build the walls.

In less than an hour the two camps were ready, and a shower of balls were flying in the air. Away they flew, and hey presto, they dissolved into powder with a thud on the enemies' cheeks and heads and

backs, till the warriors are all in a sand-coloured uniform.

"I've had enough of this cannonading," said Sidling; "suppose you call an assault, Captain."

"All right," assented Hubert; "the fact is our ammunition is about finished. Here, Mason and Thompson, you stay and guard the fort, all the others shoulder spades; and now then, out we go, and charge their walls as hard as we can. A quick rush and back again. You two fellows make balls as fast as possible, for when we return."

The charge was made so suddenly that the besieged discharged a shower of balls harmlessly over their heads, just as the file of spades made the sand walls shake and crumble into dust.

"A breach," cried the Emertonians, each boy seizing an adversary as prisoner. But the prisoners were not so easily captured, for they fought with fists and spades. Hubert and Roberts and one or two others performed prodigies of valour, and used their weapons so well that the baker boy began to think it was time to deliver those neglected loaves, and the donkey boy began to be afraid his charge would get lost without him. One or two small boys deserted with less excuse than these. The elders held on bravely for some time, till little Freddie,

with some courage, crawled among the big boys' legs and got to the flag, with which he escaped unseen, and rushed back to Mason and Thompson, who seized it and stuck it up with their own, shouting, "Victory! the colours are taken!"

Hubert, seeing what had happened, called a retreat, and the Rivermouth champions had to own themselves beaten for the time.

Harry had been taken prisoner by the big boy, whose name was Bowles; but he was exchanged afterwards for a Rivermouth boy, who had been captured by Sidling.

On the hero's return to camp, Mason gave an account of Freddie's pluck, in honour of which he was chaired by being carried on the shoulders of two boys, all the others following and cheering him. You may imagine how much Freddie enjoyed that!

It would have been well if the war had ceased with the first victory; but next day the Rivermouth captain got together a larger army, and sent a challenge to the enemy.

Hubert would willingly have made an end by giving back their colours, but the indomitable love of fighting in boys would not permit it, so the forts were again rebuilt and manned.

The cannonading went on very briskly for a time, till one of Hubert's army got a severe blow on the shoulder from a stone, which was encased in the sand-ball.

This was quite against rules, and Mason began shouting, "Look out for their balls; they put in stones."

At that moment, as it chanced, Captain Rammer was passing, his tall stiff figure very distinct among the more limp and lithe collection of ordinary people. He was looking with stern disapproval on the untidy state of the sands round the two forts, and was thinking whether the town-council ought not to prevent such unsightly games, when whizz! bang! a great ball struck him on the padded breast of his coat, and went to pieces among the double row of brass buttons, a stone falling out of it on the tenderest place of his foot. The captain picked up the stone, and looked at the belligerents to find the culprit. Seeing Harry in the act of examining a similar stone in a heap of sand in his hand, he instantly collared him.

"Come with me, you sneak, I'll take you to the magistrate, who will teach you to put stones in your sand-balls. Stone-throwing is an offence against the bye-laws."

"I assure you, Captain Rammer, *we* do not put stones in *our* balls," asserted Harry.

"What is that in your hand, sir?"

"Oh, that is one I caught."

"Don't tell lies, sir. I'll summon you, sir. What is your name, sir?" cried the captain angrily.

Here Hubert came to the rescue.

"None of our side are sneakish enough to throw stones, Captain Rammer; my brother caught that and saved himself a blow; but if you wish our names, they are Hubert and Harry Berrie, No. 10, Parade."

By this time the camp was broken up, and Mason and Roberts had gone to the adversaries to discover who had used the stones.

"It is Bowles himself," said one of the smaller boys, turning informer; "I saw his ball hit the coast-guard captain."

Bowles being brought up by his two adversaries, sulkily admitted having put in the stones, but denied any intention of hitting the captain.

"The intention is of no consequence, the act was done and must be punished. I shall have you summoned for this;" and the officer was walking off stern and erect, but the two Berries ran after him, and said in their fearless way:

"Please, Captain Rammer, will you forgive this

offence and let Bowles off; we were in fault, because we began the fight yesterday, and I dare say we aggravated them."

"It shall not happen again, sir," said Harry, with his most winning glance.

"Let him take care that it does not," muttered the captain, striding off, and the Berries went back to where Bowles stood clenching his fists, with a little crowd of his followers around.

"Do you not think we have had enough sham-fighting? We only began for play, let us shake hands now. I have got Captain Rammer not to prosecute, so no harm will come of it," and Hubert held out his hand.

Bowles took it with a sort of dogged shamefacedness.

"You are not a bad sort of fellow," he muttered, "and I am sorry I put in the stones; but I was angry."

"Then it was time to leave off play," said Hubert, shaking hands again.

And so the great battle of the sands was finished, which the boys looked back to as one of events of the Rivermouth season.



PART III.

The Berrie Scribbleological Club.







CHAPTER I.

THE ORIGIN OF THE SOCIETY.



MR. BERRIE was in his study writing an article on the skulls and teeth of the ancient Britons, with a skull before him as an inspiration, when the door opened softly and one or two curly heads peeped in.

"Are you very busy, papa?" said Elsie.

"What do you want?" asked her papa without looking up.

"Our dolls' hospital has become too full; some of the broken legs must be mended; we only have four whole people in the dolls' house. Could you spare a moment to mend these with your cement?"

Here Elsie's voice got very coaxing, and she opened her apron, showing a mass of porcelain dolls with loose and broken limbs.

"You may put them here; I will mend them when I have finished writing," said Mr. Berrie, who, though very scientific, was a good doll's surgeon.

Elsie turned them all out on the table quite close to the skull, where they made a curious contrast, between the aged thing whose life had gone out of it, and the little childlike things which never had or would have any life.

Lollie stood looking at the skull with horror in her round eyes. "What are you doing with that dweadful thing, papie?" she gasped at last; "did it come out of a gwave? how vewy howwid!"

"It was once young and pretty, like you. Don't be frightened at it, Laura, it is only the frame on which nature puts round and rosy cheeks, and blue eyes and nice little mouths. I am writing about it."

"I don't like little girls' frames. If mine is like that, I am glad it is all nicely covered up," said Lollie; "but what are you writing about it for?"

"For the Anthropological Society, my dear. Now run away, I am busy."

"What is an Anpopolochigal Society, papie, and why must you write for it?"

"It is a society of a number of gentlemen who study the different races of man; and sometimes they write down all they can find out, and then have a meeting."

"What do they do at a meeting, papa?" asked Elsie, "preach and pray, as the gardener says they do at the meetings he goes to?"

"No, my child, they read the papers they have written, and then all the members make their remarks on them. Now, dears, go."

"If they don't think what one man says right, do they tell him so?" asked Elsie.

"Yes, yes; now you must go away," replied the father absently, taking up his pen again.

"I should like to go to a meeting," sighed Elsie, as she took Lollie's hand and went out of the room. "I am going to tell my council of that meeting," she added, as she ran up-stairs to the landing at the top of the house in front of the nursery. Arrived at the iron balustrade which formed the railing of this landing, the two girls might have been seen kissing the railings all along, and then whispering to them. It really looked as if the rails answered, for as Elsie spoke to one she laughed,

and Lollie laughed too, and then they clapped their hands.

I dare say any boy or girl who reads this would think these children very comical; but if he could have seen the rails which they called the council, he would have thought them more comical still. The knobs at the end of each double rail had been made into faces, the little projections forming ears and noses, and the shoulders of them adorned with paper collars and bead necklaces. These were the latest oracles of the family, and a great many curious ideas and games were said to be taught by them. The children named them the "Council of Five," and the laws laid down by this council were always followed by them.

"Do you hear what the master says?" half-whispered Elsie; "he says we must form a society, and write papers, and have meetings; let's go and tell the others."

Away they scampered to the schoolroom, proclaiming, "The Council of Five decrees that we shall have a society."

"What sort of a one?" inquired Minna, who was making a doll's hat.

"An Antipopocoligo Society, like papa has; we are all to be members and wite about skulls," cried Lollie.

"But we don't know anything about skulls, and I am sure I don't want to write about them," said Sibyl.

"We might have some other kind of society," suggested Harry, who was carving a boat to the great danger of his fingers.

"Have a Dorcas Society, and make clothes for our school-children," hinted Minna.

"That is girl's work; you won't catch me member of that," laughed Harry.

"Why don't we have a story-telling club?" said Sibyl; "that would do."

"But we must not tell stowies," said Lollie, "it is wicked; besides, in a society we must write the papers and read them, and let the other people tell us they are wrong.—Papa said so."

"Then we will all write stories," said Sibyl, "and have some meetings to read them, and make papa and mamma join."

"That will be jolly," said Harry. "What shall we call it,—The Story Club?"

"No," cried the positive Lollie, "it must be a something-ogical."

"The Scribbleological Society then," said Harry, "that is a first-rate name. I say, Hubert and Freddie," he added as the two boys entered, "there's a Scribbleological Society started under the

laws of the Council of Five—let us proceed to enroll the members.”

As soon as they heard the project they agreed heartily.

“I’ll write a splendid story, all about witches and adventures, see if I don’t,” said Freddie.

“You won’t get any nonsense of that kind out of me,” added Hubert, “I don’t believe in imagination; but I don’t mind being secretary. Who is president?”

“Let me,” cried Lollie, always ready to rule.

“No, girls ought not to be presidents, besides, you are too small; let us put it to the vote.”

Several bits of paper were folded and drawn from Sibyl’s hand, and Freddie was elected. He felt proud of the honour, but owned that he had not the smallest idea what he should have to do.

“Oh, never mind that, presidents only have to sit in a big chair and do what their secretaries tell them,” said Harry, making light of the office which had not fallen to his share.

Within an hour Hubert, with his usual exactness, had drawn up the rules of the society, which set forth in regular style, its name and objects, the number and names of members, &c. One rule was that each member was bound to contribute at least one story or poem. That at the meetings the

manuscripts were to be drawn, read by the author, and criticised by the president and the general society. Mr. and Mrs. Berrie were elected honorary members, on condition of their being also contributors.

Scribbling had always been a great amusement in the Berrie family,—the collection of copy-books and note-books piled up in the nursery was quite astonishing. There were books of copied stories with very original illustrations, books of original stories with very curious spelling, books written in a wonderful fairy language, known only to those in the secret, and which took even the wisest longer to read than to write, and books in which the family myths and different sets of names were chronicled. But the beginning of the Scribbleological Club caused a great many new books to appear. The respective money-boxes were opened, and pennies taken from each. Harry was despatched to the stationer's with a large order for copy-books.

"Get me two, one for ideas and one for a clear copy," cried Sibyl, "and be sure they are smooth paper and single lines."

"I want nice double lines, not too big," said Lollie, "or else my stowey won't get in."

Then came the thinking time. Harry climbed to the top of a high elm-tree, so as to get above

interruptions. Freddie ran up the ladder of the stable to his favourite solitary place in the hay-loft. Sibyl walked musing round the shrubbery, looking at the bits of sky between the trees, and at length seated herself on the edge of the fountain. Elsie and Minna took pencil and paper and suggested a great many things to each other, while Lollie and Dollie brought their dolls and little chairs to the Council of Five, and sought inspiration from those iron-headed advisers.

After a great deal of imaginary talk, Dollie exclaimed: "I know a 'tory, Lollie, but I can't write it; I can't 'pell the long words. What shall I do? will you write down what I tell you?"

"Oh, no, I weally can't, it will take me ever so many hours to wite my own; but I wish you would not talk, Dollie, you put it all out of my head, and I had it almost there. Mine is about an ogre; what is yours about?"

"About my dearest, tweetest Ebelina and de f'owers. Ebelina told me herself. I shall do and ask Sibyl to write it down for me, before it goes out of my thoughts;" and away trotted Dollie, with Evelina upside-down in her arms, to find the elder sister, who was always ready to help.

Left to herself, Lollie brought out the little

table, a large inkstand, and her double-ruled copy-book, and set herself to authorship with great dignity.

When Mrs. Berrie came upstairs she found her with her elbows resting on the table and her hands buried in her fluffy locks. The pen was stuck into her hair, and had made black marks across her nose and cheeks. The copy-book in front was very much blotted and scrawled, and Lollie was murmuring, "How do we spell angel?—a-n-g-l-e." After much thought Lollie took her pen and was going to write it so, but her mother told her a-n-g-e-l.





Evening First.

HARRY'S STORY.



T is the first evening on which a meeting of the Scribbleological Club is held; the members are all assembled in the library. Freddie sits at a table, trying to look very big, but really seeming smaller than ever, for he has chosen the very largest arm-chair in the room. By his side sits Hubert, with several papers, a large inkstand, and a mysterious carved oak box in front of him. Harry, with his trousers turned up into knee-breeches, a paper cocked hat, and a wand in his hand, personates the usher of the court, and shows the members to their places. The tiniest girls are perched up on high chairs, and the two honorary members put into the low children's chairs.

"Mr. President, may I ask why have we such

small seats?" asks Mr. Berrie, when he had with a groan arrived at the low level.

"Don't you see, Mr. Honorary Member, that we want to look all equal, as members of a society should; so if we make you big people smaller and the little ones taller, nobody looks too big for anyone else."

"Oh, if there is such a good reason as that, I resign myself," said Mr. Berrie, stretching out his long legs across the floor.

Silence follows. The secretary nudges the president, who whispers, "What must I do now?"

"Why, make your opening speech, to be sure."

"Oh dear, I have forgotten it; I don't know what to say."

Here the secretary hands him a paper, saying, "Read it then."

The president stands up in his chair, gets very red, turns over his paper, coughs, shuffles about, and finally begins in a choked voice:

"Ladies and gentlemen."

"Don't laugh now, or else you'll spoil it all," mutters the secretary, on which the president grows very serious and reads on.

"We are here met for a very important and interesting object—hem—to begin the Scribble-ological Club. It has been judged by the Council of

Five that the art of writing stories is not enough encouraged among the children of England, for they are obliged to read the tales written for them by grown-up people. One-half of the writers have forgotten what children enjoy, and the other half cram in a lot of preaching with a little bit of a story to make it go down. Not but what Mr. Knatchbull Hugesson, and the authors of 'Little Women,' 'Alice in Wonderland,' 'Stumps,' and 'Hermey,' &c., are first-rate, and we don't care how much they write. (Hear, hear.) But it stands to reason that children's stories should be written by children, because they know best what they like. (Hear, hear.) Of course we cannot have everything, and the Council of Five hopes that if our tales have not the best style the members will excuse it. We will now proceed to draw the first manuscript."

Here the president is so delighted at having finished his speech that he turns a somersault off his chair, and a second over his father's legs, while a chorus arises of, "Oh, Freddie, that isn't like a president; you turn the meeting into fun."

By the time the chorus is over Master Freddie is spreading himself out in his large chair, and the grand air is upon him again.

The court-usher now steps forward, and taking

the carved box from the table, holds it before the president, who with a flourish draws out a folded copy-book, on the cover of which he reads, "A repentant sinner, but too late, by Strawberry, M.B.S.C."

"What did you go and draw mine first for?" cries Harry, forgetting his humble office of usher.

"Somebody's must come first," says Mr. Berrie. "Let us hear the story, its title sounds rather awful."

Harry pulls off his cocked hat and lays down his wand, and taking a chair which had been left empty on the other side of the president, begins rather shyly to read, saying, "I dare say you will think it a lot of bosh.

"A REPENTANT SINNER, BUT TOO LATE.

I.

"Not far away from a deep bay, whose waters were as clear as crystal, there was a small village, composed of about thirty houses. One of these, standing by itself in a lonely spot, was a little hut about three yards square and five high. It was a very badly made and tumble-down sort of place, and so much out of the way that people only passed by occasionally, and very few were interested in the

person who lived there. If any one had taken the trouble to look at the hut one evening before sunset, he would have taken it for a deserted place, if he had not heard a lot of noise going on inside, like a boy rummaging about. And if he had waited till the sun got up, he would have seen a small boy emerging from the hut,—a fellow about four feet high and ten years old. After he had left all was quiet within. Could it be that such a poor pale little boy was living all alone? Yet so it was, he had been left an orphan for three years, and his elder brother had run away from home while he was quite a baby. But though the boy was lean, haggard, and poorly dressed, he had really a great deal of money. Where had he got it all? We will follow him and see, as he went trotting along on his young legs towards the edge of the lake.

“A gentleman, followed by a large Newfoundland dog, was taking a stroll by the water, and had scarcely noticed the figure that passed him like a shadow, till he suddenly saw a human form in mid-air and heard a plunge. In horror he turned to whistle his dog; but the creature was as quick as he; a second splash followed the first, and the dog had dived after the boy. The stranger waited breathlessly; but the boy and the dog stayed so long under

water that he was obliged at last to gasp. He looked and looked, but not a sign of either was to be seen ; he whistled, he called the dog by name ; but it was no use,—no dog came, nor any answer to his call. He waited a quarter of an hour, then half an hour, then he began to get dazy, and thought he had only fancied it all. Perhaps the dog had come out farther up and had gone home. As for the boy, he convinced himself there was no boy there, nor ever had been ; so he toddled home, thinking it was better to dream his dreams quietly in his bed.

“ But what had really become of the boy ? he could not stay under water all the time ; and the dog too, where was he ?

“ When Edgar, for that was the boy's name, had dived down about ten feet, near a projecting rock, he took to swimming under water, and went into a dark black vault, like an arch in the rock. As quick as lightning he went through it, for his breath was nearly spent, but unfortunately there were some weeds in the hole, and his foot got caught. He was struggling awfully, feeling as if his last hour was come, when he felt something touch against him, that carried him right through the hole, and to his delight he saw the water had changed colour. From being all dark it turned to beautiful blue and green,

sparkling like crystal; he knew what that meant,—he was saved! and began swiftly to swim upwards, for his strength was almost gone. I can tell you he was jolly glad to get his head above water, and to breathe freely again, for though this takes so long to tell he had not been more than fifty seconds under water altogether. He turned round to see who his preserver was, and to his astonishment found it was a big dog panting for breath; the poor beast was paddling about trying in vain to get out of the water. Edgar soon scrambled up on a ledge of rocks, and pulling the dog up after him, he put his arms round his neck and thanked the faithful creature as if he had been a man. The place where they were was a small cavern, in which the sunlight came from a hole in the rock above, and made the water sparkle like diamonds. From here a corridor led to a big room or cavern, just as good as Ali Baba's cave, for the corners of it were piled up with gold and treasures, such a lot! It was not the first time Master Edgar had been there, for he seemed to know all about it, and falling on his knees he filled a big pouch that he carried with him, and was just going away when a loud commanding voice called out, 'Stop there, you rascal,' and he was so astounded that he *did* stop to see where the voice came from.

"It would have been much better if he had taken a run and dived off again, for the next moment he was surrounded by a lot of ruffians, all jabbering at once and shaking their fists like mad. Then a tall strong young man came from among them, crying in a terrible voice, 'Well, you little thief, we have



caught you at last; it is about the tenth time you have been stealing our gold.'

"Edgar taking courage, answered, 'You cowardly scoundrels, I am not a thief, I am taking back that which was my father's, and nothing more. You took all our money and left us beggars. Father was

always certain there were pirates about this bay, and was longing to find your lair.'

"The captain not expecting all this, got very angry at being answered so boldly by such a small boy, and was going to chastise him, when a thought struck him that it would be better to keep the little fellow as a prisoner, and make a servant of him, for he could obtain food from the villages without being suspected. So he said in a wheedling voice, 'You are a fine plucky little man; will you join us?'

"'I join you! you that have robbed us of all our possessions. I should be ashamed of such a thing!'

"The captain, still trying to keep cool, asked: 'How did you get in here?' for the pirates had a concealed entrance into the wood on the land side of the cave, and they knew they had found that safely locked.

"'I won't tell you that!' said Edgar.

"'Then you shall stop here till you do,' and the captain laid hold of him in a fury.

"'Let me go,' cried Edgar; 'be quick!'

"'No, I shan't!' shouted the captain with a face as red as a turkey cock, for his monkey was up now and no mistake. 'You are an obstinate ass, and shall die first. We are not going to send you back to the village as our informer.' Edgar was almost at

the end of his courage, and was going to beg for mercy; but hearing the captain whisper to his men, 'Let us fling him into the water of the inner cavern,' he held his tongue and looked dogged as ever, though he was as glad as possible, while two men seized hold of him and dragged him along the corridor to the blue cave Edgar knew so well. All this time the dog, who had taken Edgar under his protection, was barking like mad and snapping at all the men's heels in turn, till they used strong language and wished him farther. 'As soon as the boy is disposed of, we'll tie a cord round the cur's neck,' they muttered. When they got to the water the two men began swinging Edgar backwards and forwards over it, to frighten him a little first, and he pretended to be awfully afraid, for he thought if he looked glad they would smell out something. At length at a signal from the captain they let him drop in with a splash. You may be sure he did not lose time, his heels were up in a moment, and down he dived towards the hole and disappeared, certain from a second splash that the faithful dog had also made his escape. The pirates waited on the ledge to see their victim reappear; but with all their staring they never set eyes on the boy; he went down and never came up, and what is odd,

the dog also had vanished. Tired of staring at the water they began to stare at each other. The captain at length exclaimed, 'Well, I'm dashed!' and all the men muttered in a chorus, 'Well, I'm dashed!'

"'What's the meaning of this?' asked the captain.

"'Blessed if I know,' replied each man, till one, the oldest of the lot, said :

"'I suppose he's caught in the weeds in the bottom; anyway, if he isn't come up yet he won't come up alive any more;' on which the captain nodded his head and they all went away.

II.

"Edgar and his companion, the dog, got home quite safely, and Edgar threw himself on his couch and went to sleep, for I can tell you he *was* tired. Next morning a bright sun was shining through the window and woke him up. He dressed quickly, eat some bread and water and gave some to his dear four-footed friend, and putting a hunch of bread in his pocket, went out. He walked through the village, and went on over the hill towards the sea till he got to a small house, where lived an old coast-guardsmen

and his wife. This man had often showed kindness to Edgar, and when he saw him coming he went out with a smile to welcome him in.

“‘I have something of importance to tell you. Is there not a price put on the head of a pirate captain?’

“‘Yes,’ said Mr. Roller, ‘there is.’

“‘I know where he lives,’ replied Edgar.

“‘Where? for Heaven’s sake!’

“‘Why, just under you.’

“Mr. Roller jumped up from his chair in astonishment. ‘Under me! where? where?’ he shrieked out.

“Edgar laughed immensely at this, but soon told him all that had happened.

“‘Thank you, my boy, for the information; you shall be rewarded for this. Now come and have some breakfast, then I’ll call my mates, and we’ll see about the pirates.’

“After breakfast Mr. Roller told the coast-guard captain, and he got about fifteen men, all good divers and swimmers, who took their guns wrapped up in water-proof covers, and water-tight boxes of ammunition, which they slung over their jerseys, and went to the bay. Edgar showed them the hole they were to dive for, and went first to show

the way. They all followed noiselessly, and came up all right, but a little out of breath, in the cave. When they reached the big cave and saw the gold, weren't they astonished, that's all! The men hid in all the dark vaults round the cave, and Edgar began to rattle the gold about to call the pirates. A trampling of feet was soon heard, and the whole lot of pirates rushed in; but they were so amazed to see Edgar alive, that they just stood and stared at him quite dumbfounded; but as soon as a volley of shot poured in on them from Edgar's friends, they had to fight for it, and did so valiantly,—there was a jolly scrimmage, I can tell you. After a long fight, the pirates, having lost five of their men, asked for mercy, for their captain had escaped in some way. So the survivors were taken prisoners, their hands tied behind their backs, and they were commanded to show the way out. They went up some rude steps, and when the guardsmen emerged in the open air they found themselves in a dark thick wood. The prisoners were placed in a cart and taken to prison, and soon after tried and executed, for they had committed a lot of murders. Edgar got rich with the spoil from the cavern, and lived happily for some time.

III.

"Edgar no longer lived in the tumble-down hut, but in a nice little house with a garden full of flowers; and the faithful dog lived with him, for its master never reclaimed it. Edgar was very hospitable, and never refused any one food or rest, and one evening a young man, wrapped up in a cloak, knocked at the door and asked for shelter; so Edgar begged him to come in and make himself as comfortable as he possibly could.

"The stranger had dark hair and whiskers and black eyes. He asked if Edgar lived alone, and seemed to be surprised at his doing so. After a nice supper, Edgar showed the stranger to a bedroom, and then went to his own, followed by the dog. After the man had been quiet for some time, he silently came out of his room with a long knife in his hand, and crept softly towards Edgar's room, and opened the door very softly. The boy was sleeping peacefully, and did not move even when the wicked fellow stood over him, his arm raised in the act of plunging his knife into the heart of the unconscious sleeper. Before he could do it, the wretch felt himself caught

by the neck, and heard a low growl close to his ear. It was the brave dog, who lost his life in trying to save his young master, for the sharp blade in the man's hand instantly put an end to the noble animal. Edgar was awakened by the growl, and the first thing he saw was the lifeless body of his dog falling bleeding at his feet. He rushed out of bed, wrestled with the stranger for some time, but at last fell on the ground exhausted. The man standing over him with his knife raised, exclaimed :

“‘Do you know me now? I am the captain of the pirates, and you shall not betray me again,’ with that he plunged the weapon in Edgar’s heart.

“Turning round in search of plunder, his eyes rested on a book that he seemed to remember. It was a Bible, which Edgar’s mother had left to him on her death-bed. He opened it, and to his horror saw his own mother’s name,—

Eliza Bannock,

March 10th, 1815.

“Yes, it was true, he was the wild lad who had run away from his mother, and lived among the pirates ever since; he was the robber of his own father’s property, and now had killed Edgar without knowing that it was his brother.

"He was very sore at heart, and with tears in his eyes, turned with a faint hope that his brother was still alive; but no, the brave boy was dead,—bitter repentance came too late!

THE END."

Sibyl. "What a dreadful story, Harry; how could you imagine such a lot of horrors?"

Freddie. "I think it first-rate; it is an awfully jolly story, quite like a book."

Mr. Berrie. "It is sufficiently exciting, and reads like a highly-seasoned mixture of the Arabian Nights, Captain Maine Reed, and Harrison Ainsworth, with a slight flavouring of the original boy about it."

Mrs. Berrie. "I am glad that in all the horrors Harry has made his story moral, and that repentance comes though late."

Hubert. "I do not think it is quite moral, for if the wicked had been punished, Edgar ought to have killed the pirate, not *vice-versâ*."

Harry. "But then Edgar would have been a murderer instead of the good boy, and the pirate would not have had time for repentance; don't you see that, old fellow?"

Minna. "Of course Harry is right. I think if Edgar had known he was dying to save a wicked brother from his sins, he wouldn't have minded."

Hubert. "Oh, indeed! I should rather."

Lollie. "But was Edgar twite, twite good, mamie? Isn't it wicked to wob from the wobbers as much as it is from other people?"

Harry. "He thought he was taking his own money back again, for they had stolen it from his father, don't you remember, Lollie?"

Sibyl. "It is like Jack of the Bean-stalk, it was not wicked of him to steal from the ogre, because they were his own father's things he was taking back."

Hubert. "Well, if it is possible to have pirates in a cave in modern times, and a boy able to swim so long under water, the story is not bad."

Freddie. "It is a splendid story, and you hear it happened quite in old times. The Bible was marked 1815, that is seventy years ago—ages—ages—quite long enough for there to have been pirates."

Hubert, still critical. "Land pirates, eh?"

Freddie, as president. "Now, Mr. Court-Usher, bring the box, and we will choose another paper."

Harry gives up the dignity of author, and putting on the cocked hat again, meekly holds the box. The

president draws a scrap of paper, folded and entitled :
"My Dolly and the Flowers, told all by myself. By
Mulberry, M.B.S.C."

President. "Dollie, you can't read writing; who
will you choose to read it for you?"

Dollie takes the paper, and holding it upside-down, seats herself in the author's chair, saying:
"I will read it all myself; it's my very own 'tory,
what Ebelina told me. Where is Ebelina? oh
dere she is, on the ground." The doll is taken up
carefully, set very upright in Dollie's vacant chair,
then the youngest author goes back to her post, and
begins with great gravity to read, still with her
paper upside down.

"There was once a very p'etty dolly, and when her
mamma (dat's me, you know," nodded the author)
"was asleep, dolly dot up very softly, very softly
indeed, and went to look out of de window. (Dat
was very dangerous, you know, betause she hadn't
any fock on, but on'y her petsicoat.) So de gejanium
saw her, and said, 'Tum and play wif me, dolly;'
but dolly said, 'No, you are not very p'etty.' So
den de rose said, 'Tum and play wif me;' but she
wouldn't, betause de rose p'icked her fingers so. Den
de—de—" here Dollie turns her paper round and
round, but cannot go on. "I don't 'member how

to read the next," she sighs, then jumping off her chair, runs to Sibyl, and putting her arm very close round her neck, whispers quite loud, "Sibbie, what was de p'etty f'ower talled?"

"Jasmine," replies her sister with a kiss.

Dollie nods, and quite unheeding the laughs of her brothers and sisters, goes back with a satisfied smile to her place, and continues solemnly:

"Den de jasmine looked in at the window and said, 'Tum and play wif me, dolly;' and when dolly saw that the jasmine was—oh! so p'etty, all tovered with 'ittle white stars, all smooof and white, she said, 'Yes, I will tum and 'tay wif you,' so she went and lived with de jasmine. Isn't dat a p'etty 'tory? I will make a *very longer* one next time," concluded Dollie, looking with a beaming smile at her audience.

Lollie. "That isn't a bit like my story, and I wrote mine myself."

Mrs. Berrie. "It is a dear little baby story; come and let mamie kiss you for it." Dollie flies to her mother's lap, but soon returns to fetch her doll, who has to be kissed also, both by mamie and father.

Minna. "What put it into your head, Dollie?"

Dollie. "I donno, I fink it came when de jasmine looked in at de window, and I made Ebelina kiss de jasmine."

Sibyl. "I think she got the idea from little Ida and the flowers, which I told her one day."

Dollie. "No, I didn't det it anywhere, I made it all myself."

President, loftily. "Well, 't isn't bad for such a child; of course one can't expect much from her."





Evening Second.



HE first story drawn at this meeting is entitled "Edie's Sparrow, by Hawberry, M.B.S.C.," and the secretary without delay begins to read.

I.

"At the bottom of a hill, beside a little stream, stood a cottage half-hidden beneath the leaves of some oak-trees. Any one walking across the narrow lane towards the cottage on the afternoon of a

certain May-day nearly twenty years ago, would have discovered on the thatched roof a boy, or at least as much as could be seen of him, that is to say a left arm, and a head with two big round eyes directed to the hole into which he had thrust his right arm.

"Just then a big fat dame waddled out of the house, and casting her eyes on the roof, exclaimed, 'Billie! what are you after now?'

"'Oh,' said Billie, thrusting his arm still farther into the straw, 'I want to get this sparrow out of his hole.'

"'Take care you don't tumble down and break an arm or a leg, then,' said she, as if Billie were provided with several limbs of each kind.

"'You need not be afraid of that, mother,' replied Billie, talking very big, 'I've walked all over the thatch several times and I haven't broken my legs yet.'

"Mrs. Figgins thought good to retire into her cottage. She had her reasons for this, for Billie had got the sparrow and was wrapping it up in his handkerchief ready to fling it down to her, and Mrs. Figgins did not think helping to rob birds'-nests was a suitable occupation for a woman of her age.

"Just at this moment Frank, the baker's boy, came whistling down the lane, and had just arrived under the oaks, when he caught sight of Billie on the roof. He stopped a minute, as if to consider what to do, and then bawled out, 'Bill! what are you after, eh?'

" 'What does that matter to you, I should like to know?'

" 'Why, it matters that you will just jump down off that roof, and if you don't—'

" 'Well, if I don't?'

" 'I'll make you do it, you beggar.'

" 'Oh, will you though!'

" 'Won't I? just jump down or we'll see.'

" Billie, however, thought he might as well stay up there, seeing that Frank could not easily get at him. However, Frank was not to be daunted where there was any bullying to be done, and pulling a shiny apple out of his pocket, shied it at Billie, and succeeded in hitting him on the ribs, which caused him to double up; and also caused him to slip down into the very arms of the delighted Frank, who having picked him up and allowed him time to shake himself together, squared up into an offensive attitude. Billie not wishing to tarnish the noble art of self-defence, stood up bravely to the fight. The first round proved successful to plump Billie, who

knocked Frank through the window of the cottage. The result was a cry from Frank, seconded by a screech from the back kitchen, and Mrs. Figgins made her appearance at the door with soap-suddy hands to see what was the matter. There generally was something the matter where Billie was concerned ; but Mrs. Figgins had not got used to it yet, and was always surprised. She found the fight was at its highest pitch, the two boys sparring awfully. Mrs. Figgins failed in her first attempt to separate them ; she was, however, not a woman to lose courage, and went up-stairs to her bedroom, which looked on the garden, and seizing a jug of water, with admirable precision threw it over the combatants, who gasping, spluttering, and spitting, stopped fighting in a trice. This was just what the good woman wanted, and she was hastening down the stairs to send Frank off ; but he had already discovered that it was time to go, and all she saw of him were his heels just disappearing round a turn in the lane.

“ ‘ A good thing too, the rascal,’ she said, as she sent Billie with a cuff on the back into the house.

II.

"WHAT BECAME OF THE SPARROW.

"But the sparrow, what about him? I will tell you presently. I must first introduce the heroes who have tumbled headlong into my story. The parish was the village of Fairstone, and the thatched cottage was inhabited by Mrs. Figgins, a widow of about fifty years of age, very corpulent, but a jolly sort of woman altogether. She had, in fact, never been known to get out of temper, except when Ted (the bad boy of the village) had chopped off her tom-cat's tail, and sent him home with nut-shells ingeniously attached to his feet with cobbler's wax. Her son Billie, to whose head and fists you have already been introduced, was very like his mother—mild-tempered and tending to stoutness. Then there was Edie, a sweet-tempered little girl of ten years old, with rosy cheeks and big round eyes and dark hair. These were the only inhabitants of the cottage, and they would have been a very peaceable household, had it not been for Frank, the baker's son, and Ted, the son of the butcher, who were always leading Billie into mischief. They were about Bill's own age, and were the

horror of all the women of the village, old and young. If any apples were missing from the orchards, or eggs from the poultry-yard, Frank or Ted would certainly be hidden in some corner of the orchard or barn, employed in the laudable operation of dividing the spoils of the joint foraging campaign. Dogs fled them, no doubt with a dread of tin-kettles; cats scampered up the nearest tree or house on their approach; even the cockchafers seemed to buzz small when they appeared.

“And now for the sparrow, which we left wrapped up in a handkerchief. When Billie made his sudden and sprawling descent, the sparrow fell to the ground with him, and remained squealing all the time of the fight. When Billie was soused, the poor little bird being under the shower, thought its last hour was come, and by the time the boy remembered it and came to pick it up, it could hardly say ‘peet, peet,’ it was so exhausted. Just then Edie returned from school, and caught sight of it.

“‘Oh, Billie, how could you be so cruel as to take it away from its nest?’ she cried, taking it off the table and fondling it in her hands. ‘Poor little thing, how wet he is.’

“‘I don’t doubt that, and I’ll make them wetter another time, if they kick up such a shindy in my

garden, and break the windows too!' said Mrs. Figgins.

"Edie's round eyes opened. 'Why, how could such a tiny bird have done all that, mother?'

"'Tisn't the bird I'm talking of, but those tire-some boys. Here, Billie, you had better change your coat, I don't mean you to catch cold, anyhow.'

"But Billie had vanished. He soon came back with some dry moss for the bird, and then the house was rummaged for a cage. A very dusty one was found in the lumber-room; the bird was deposited on the moss within it and fed. After the Figgins family had had supper and prayers, a bargain was concluded between Edie and her brother. He consented to give her the sparrow on condition that she sewed some new sails on to his boat. The cage was hung in one of Edie's windows, and soon the three Figginses were in the arms of sweet Morpheus.

III.

"Next morning Edie was awakened early by a bright little 'peet, peet.' She was startled by the unusual sound, but soon remembering her sparrow

she began to dress. It was a bright Sunday morning, the sky was cloudless, the sun was peeping over the hills to see what sort of a face he had better put on for the day; and when he saw Edie at her window he decided on a shining one. She was just going down to breakfast when a somewhat anxious 'peet, peet' reminded her that Dicky wanted his breakfast as well as herself, so she ran away to get it. Had she remained she would have seen Frank and Ted going arm in arm towards the village as dirty and careless as on other days, for they seldom went to church. When they reached the cottage Ted caught sight of the cage. 'Hullo!' said he.

" 'What?' asked Frank.

" 'Do you see that cage there?'

" 'Well, what if I do?'

" 'We can reach it, can't we?'

" 'I suppose we could with that old ladder,' replied Frank, pointing to a ladder resting against a tree.

" Ted lost no time; he caught up the ladder, put it gently against the window, and climbing stealthily up, got hold of the cage. Just as he nearly reached the ground the ladder fell with a crash, and they had to scamper off. Edie ran out

with her hand full of bird-seed just in time to see a back view of two boys running away with a cage. She called them back, but in vain, and then flew after them, screaming: 'Bring back my bird, you naughty boys!'

"They got out of the lane and took to the fields, little Edie scampering breathlessly after them with her hands outstretched. Her eyes were so fixed on the cage, getting farther and farther away from her, that she did not look where she was going, till all at once she felt as if she stepped upon nothing, then crash! bang! something seemed to crack in her leg, and a great blow came on her head; for one moment she saw all kinds of flashes, and then remembered nothing more, but lay quite still at the bottom of a ditch with her head on a large stone.

"How long she might have lain there nobody knows, had it not been for a kind farmer who, passing that way, found her and carried her home, just as her mother, dressed in her best, was calling her to go to church.

"For four days she was raving with fever, after that time she quieted down, and on the sixth day returned to consciousness. A little cage with a bird in it stood on the window-sill, and attracted her

attention; she began to wonder vaguely whether she had dreamed it was stolen and that she ran after the thieves, when she heard a sob by her bedside, and there was Frank crying, while near Mrs. Figgins stood Ted with sorrowful eyes rivetted on the pallid face of Edie.

"Yes, Dicky, Frank, and Ted were all there. Though fond of mischief they were not downright wicked boys, and seeing the serious consequences of what they had done, they really repented—for perhaps the first time in their lives. They brought back the cage the very next day, and since then they passed every spare hour at the cottage, that good old soul, Mrs. Figgins, being quite overcome by the change in them. When Edie woke out of a troubled slumber, Ted came nearer to her.

"‘Edie,’ he sobbed, ‘I beg your pardon. I won’t do so any more.’

"‘So do I, really,’ said Frank, but it could be seen from his face how much harder it was for him to beg pardon.

"Edie answered with a faint smile, and extended her thin little hands to them both. This was too much for the boys, it made their hearts feel as if they were going to burst, so they scuffled out of the room and scampered home each his own way

without saying a word, only when Ted got out of sight he might have been seen drawing his coat-sleeve furtively across his eyes, and Frank muttered, 'I feel as if I could blub like a girl. Edie is a dear little thing, and no mistake.'

"How much more did they profit by this lesson than by the frequent beatings they had received !

"But let us return to Edie's room. Mrs. Figgins was sitting near the window, mending an old pair of Billie's breeches, when that hero entered the room with a plate of peaches.

" 'I've kept them all for you, Edie,' he said, upsetting them all over her on the bed. 'They are off my own peach-tree, and I haven't eaten one myself.'

"Edie smiled and took one in her hand, but she could not hold it long.

" 'Bless the boy,' cried his mother ; 'there, go along and eat them now, then, for your sister must not have them all, that's certain.' She would have sent him away with them all, but Edie kept one, and murmuring, 'Thank you, Billie, dear,' made a mouth as if she wanted to kiss him, on which Billie went away with his eyes curiously winking.

"Under the care of her mother, Edie got well; but it was long before she could run about as she used to.

"Frank and Ted were always welcome at the

cottage, and became Billie's constant companions, and strange to say, they rarely did any mischief, and neither Edie nor Dicky were at all afraid of them."

During the reading of this story Lollie and Dollie have been differently affected. Lollie mutters often, "nasty boys, howwid boys," and clenches her little fist, while Dollie lets Evelina fall unheeded on the ground, while she sobs and wipes her eyes in her pinafore, till it is all wet and crumpled.

Dollie, sobbing, "De 'tory makes me c'y; poor 'ittle dirl ill in bed; Dollie doesn't like de 'tory."

Lollie. "I *hate* those wascals of boys, wobbling apples and wonning away with little girl's nice little birds,—nasty, ugly, howwid, great wude boys," and Lollie stamped her foot at each adjective.

Elsie. "I like a story to end well—why didn't you make somebody marry and live happily ever afterwards, Hubert?"

Sibyl, laughing. "They can't marry at ten years old, can they? I think if the boys become good that is a happy enough ending."

Hubert. "But I have not read the conclusion of my story, there's more of it."

Chorus. "Let us hear it then."

Hubert reads:—

"CONCLUSION.

"Ten long years have passed! It is a beautiful morning, the sun is shining brightly through the panes of the church windows, and illuminates a wedding-party at the altar. The fine young man who acts as groomsman looks familiar. Can it be Ted? And the bridegroom? In those bright and handsome features we scarcely know the perverse and careless Frank, yet it is really he. But who is the bride? Ah! a little bird will tell you that. A merry chirrup on the church window-sill makes the congregation look up. With a cheerful 'peet, peet' a bird flies down, and perches on the shoulder of the bride.

"Ah! we need not tell you now who the bride is; is it possible to mistake the little bird for anything else than Edie's sparrow?"

Elsie. "So they lived happily ever after,—if you won't end your tale rightly, I will do it for you."

Mr. Berrie. "A very nice little story, Hubert; you have drawn a good deal from life."

Mrs. Berrie. "I expected it of him; Hubert is nothing if he is not true. You have some poetry in you after all, my boy."

Hubert, modestly. "Oh, no, it is mostly fact."

Harry. "I know the very boys he sketched from, they live in our village, and I know the very cottage where Edie lives; and Edie is a very nice little girl, and sings in our choir; and I say, Hu, shall I tell the real Mrs. Figgins that you said she waddled, eh?" A make-believe sparring match takes place between the brothers, Hubert pretending to hit, and Harry suddenly rolling on the ground.

Minna. "It seems in all the stories as if somebody good has to suffer to make the bad somebodies better."

Sibyl. "That gives me an idea, Minna, perhaps that is what suffering is sent us for—is it, mamie?"

Mrs. Berrie. "It is one of its uses, my dear, ever since the One, who only is good, suffered to save sinners. We are often called on to endure for the sake of others."

Harry. "Is not that putting a moral on, Aunt Olive? we agreed not to spoil the stories with morals, like fables and goody-goody books. It is like wrapping up a powder in jam."

Mrs. Berrie. "My moral is so good that it is more like a sugar-plum wrapped in honey. Nobody can object to such a sweet truth as that."

Freddie, stretching his legs very far out in his

big chair, and putting on the air of a critic. "Well, Hubert, your story is not bad, especially the fight; why did you not give a more particular account of that, 'twould have been better than breaking a poor girl's leg?"

Dollie, beginning to howl afresh. "De 'tory made me c'y, ai, a—i, poor 'ittle dirl."

Harry, very slily. "I say, Hubert, don't you think that sparrow was a very old bird when he blessed the happy bride, eh?"

Hubert. "Only the tenth part of the age of a crow, according to the saying that crows live a hundred years."





Evening Third.

THE STORIES OF KNIGHT SIGURD AND THE OGRE.



RESIDENT, taking a peculiar looking manuscript from the box, "Oh, this is a poor little tale, only one page! let us see the title: 'A dredful ogur, by Bilberry, M.B.S.C.' Bilberry had better learn to spell."

Lollie, in great excitement, "It's mine, it's mine! Now you shall hear my stowy,—you should not make wemarks on the spelling, Fweddie, I'm only a little girl, and can't understand spelling. I can wite a stowy, though, you shall hear."

With that Lollie promptly takes her seat in the author's chair, settling herself with great self-

satisfaction, and in a high shrill voice and a total absence of R's, reads the following story. The spelling is so very droll, that it might amuse our readers more if we give it in its original state.

"Once upon a time there was a dredful ogur, as ugly as this one, who teesed all the littel boys and gurls. He made their dollies to tumbel down and braik, an' he made there stomicks to aik when they had had a nice party and lots of cake, an' he made the rain come just when they wanted to go for a nice pick-nik. One day this dredful ogur would swing in our swing, but he did not know the way, and he could not hold on tite becaws he had claws for hands, so he fell down and broak his head and died. Then when he was quite ded, he flewed up to heven, but the angel would not let him go in, becaws the angel sed, 'You are not *finished*, you are not an angel yet, but only an *ogur still*.'"

Here Lollie stops and looks all round the company with a triumphant gaze, but nobody says a single word. The fact is that the whole Scribble-ological Club is convulsed with laughter, and having tried to stop it till the story was over, every one burst into a roar as soon as Lollie ceased, on which

the authoress, in great indignation, steps down from her chair, and with her little round nose well lifted into the air, says, severely :

"You are all vewy wude people, evwybody is laughing at my stowy."

Mr. Berrie. "Brava, Lollie, it is a very funny story indeed."

Mrs. Berrie, wiping her eyes. "Very funny."

Hubert. "Awfully ridiculous !"

Harry. "I think it intensely jolly, Lollie ; you can't get a moral out of that now, can you, Aunt Olive ?"

Mrs. Berric. "To be sure I can, two if you like. One is, don't attempt to swing if your hands are not adapted to holding a rope ; that moral may be useful in many ways."

Sibyl. "It means, don't try to do what is beyond your power, I suppose. Well, mamie, what is the second moral ?"

Mrs. Berrie. "That ogres cannot become angels without a complete change of heart."

Minna. "I suppose you mean sinners by ogres, do you not, Aunt Olive ? I understand what you mean."

President, to whom the court-usher rather hastily

presents the box. "The next story is called, 'Knight Sigurd's Quest, by Olive Berrie, H.M.B.S.C.' Ah! here is mother's, now we shall have something good. Come, mamie, the president himself shall hand you to the reading-chair." With the president on one side, the court-usher leading the way, and all the members clapping hands very loudly, Mrs. Berrie is placed in state, and begins.

"KNIGHT SIGURD'S QUEST.

"King Arthur sat on his golden throne in the great hall of Tintagil, for it was his hour for hearing the petitions of his people.

"The suppliants passed in and knelt before him on the marble step between the great bronze lions which guarded the throne, and one by one they went away with a smile of hope on their faces, for the good king was always ready to help the poor and oppressed, and to be a kind father to all his people.

"A widow, whose husband had been killed in a war with a neighbouring tribe, passed out, clasping in her hands the gift which would keep her and her babe from starving.

"A poor knight, old and grey, tottered away, grasping tremblingly the royal decree, which gave

him back his lands from the plunderer, and he murmured, smiling :

“ ‘ My son has his inheritance.’ ”

“ Then with a rush, and a stir among the door-keepers, a man with a wild face and travel-stained garments hastened into the hall, and flinging himself on the step at the king’s feet, cried out :

“ ‘ A quest, oh king, a quest !’ ”

“ A row of young knights were standing behind the throne as a guard, and from their midst two or three stepped eagerly forward with their hands on the hilts of their swords, each exclaiming :

“ ‘ I am ready for the quest, oh king.’ ”

“ But waving them back, Arthur asked the suppliant : ‘ Where and what is thy quest ?’ ”

“ ‘ In the remotest part of your Majesty’s kingdom of Lyonesse there are mountains of rocks which eternally fight the restless sea. In one of these is a great cave where God’s sun has never entered, and here dwells the giant Menzogna, which is, being interpreted, Untruth. He comes forth in many different forms, pleasant and gay, and tempts our sons and daughters away, taking them to his cave, where he makes them his slaves, and they can never afterwards enter Paradise. He has even now stolen from me my three young daughters. Oh, great

king, are none of your knights strong enough to slay this false giant, and bring our children back to God's sunlight again.'

"Once more the young knights started forward with their hands on their swords; but Knight Sigurd strode in front of the king, falling on one knee, and drew his sword till it flashed like lightning, and a great eagerness shone in his face as he cried:

"'Send me on this quest, oh king!'

"'Art thou worthy?' asked Arthur, 'because none but the pure can slay this giant.'

"'Try me, oh king! I know not if I am worthy, for I am the least of thy knights; but I am ready.'

"The monarch took from his pouch of velvet a little mirror, and flashed it on Sigurd, whose firm eyes did not waver in its gleam.

"'Thou art true, and shalt have the quest, go with the man, he will be thy guide; but lest thou also be deceived by this false giant, take this mirror, it is called Truth. Try all you see in Menzogna's domains by its reflection,—the real will keep its semblance, but the false will melt away in it like mist. Trust not thine own judgment in anything, for then thou art under the power of Arrogance, the friend and ally of Untruth.'

"Sigurd thanked the king as he kneeled to kiss his hand, and when he had put the precious mirror into the breast of his doublet, and bid his friends adieu, he mounted his white steed and rode off, the man running at his saddle-bow.

"He rode till the sun was high, and he rode till the sun was low, and at eventide he saw the distant sea, all red, yellow, and purple, as if it gleamed with fire beneath a blazing sky; and the great rocks stretched out into the lighted waters like black monsters with rugged claws.

"'We are now in the realm of the giant Menzogna, and I will leave you, praying that your quest may prosper,' said the man.

"Sigurd rode on, saying: 'At least the way is safe enough at present, no enemy is in sight, and there is only a flowery mead between me and the sea.'

"The man shook his head doubtfully, and stood watching his champion wistfully as he rode out of sight.

"The Knight spurred his horse across the green meadow, glistening with red and yellow flowers, and his head was proudly upheld as he thought of the honour that awaited him on his return to Arthur's court in victory.

"But alas! although invisible, his first enemy, Arrogance, had already got hold of him.

"His horse sunk and plunged wildly in what he had thought a safe green meadow, and he found it was only a morass covered with slimy verdure, and that the scarlet and gold gleams were not flowers, but the reflections from the sky on the stagnant water between the weeds.

"Humbled, meek, and feeling ashamed of having soiled his robe even before reaching his quest, Sigurd thought of the king's warning, and pulled out his mirror. Then he clearly saw the soft green grass melt away, and the foul morass, in which lived newts and crawling snakes, spread before him; moreover, he beheld his enemy Arrogance laughing spitefully to see him in this plight. So Sigurd drew his sword, and after a fierce fight he slew Arrogance, who sank down into the morass with a wild cry like that of a night-bird, and where he sank the evil serpents lifted up their heads, and then plunged writhing down again into the dark mud.

"After that Sigurd trusted no more to his own judgment, but knowing that nothing but Truth can stand against deceit, he used his mirror constantly.

"It showed him that the only firm road to reach the cave was a narrow ledge of rocks, and it rendered

visible numbers of evil spirits hovering over the rocks in the form of dark winged birds, and lastly it pointed out to him the hidden entrance to the cave.

"There was a very difficult cliff to be climbed to reach this opening, so he left his horse tied to a rock below, and thrusting the mirror into his breast to leave his hands free, he climbed up the steep path? but what was his astonishment on reaching the door of the cave to find that it was barred and cross-barred in all directions with steel, and that a little imp stood behind the bars grinning at his dismay. For a moment he was appalled; his sword could not cut those barriers, nor his hands tear them down.

"'Ha, ha!' screamed the spiteful imp, 'our gates are strong; you can't come in.'

"Then Sigurd remembered his mirror, pulled it out, and lo! the bars were nothing but cobweb and the imp a lie. In a moment he had passed the false barrier and slain the imp; the grating hung in shreds behind him, waving as the wind rushed mournfully in from the sea.

"Sigurd passed through many winding and tortuous passages, for nothing is straightforward in the palace of untruth. At length he heard strange music and saw a glimmer of lights. He had again put away

his mirror, for he needed both hands to feel his way in those dark and crooked ways. The music and lights drew him on, and he found himself in a large glaring hall, where a king sat on a glittering throne, and a throng of people, old and young, all dressed in gay clothing, and with broad laughter on their faces and jests on their tongues, were feasting, dancing, playing, and singing. Among them Sigurd saw three lovely young girls, dressed in blue robes; a rosy flush was on their faces, and their eyes beamed with excitement. Remembering the three daughters of the man who had given him the quest, Sigurd drew near to them.

“‘Are you come to dance too?’ asked one of them.

“‘We lead such a merry life here!’ said another.

“‘Do you never think of your father grieving for you at home?’ asked Sigurd, and as he spoke a shadow passed over the face of the youngest and prettiest one, like the memory of a dream. ‘Tell me which is the giant Menzogna,’ said Sigurd, ‘I am come to fight him and release you all.’

“‘We know of no giant Menzogna,’ one replied.

“‘Untruth, then, the name is the same,’ said Sigurd.

“‘There is no untruth here, we are in the palace of enjoyment, and do not want to be released,’ spoke the second sister; but the youngest one glanced wistfully at Sigurd, and seemed to feel some oppression to which the others were insensible, for she put her hand on her heart.

“The king moved uneasily on his throne, for a cold wind had rushed in after the knight’s entrance, and chilled his Majesty, and he called out:

“‘What unbidden guest has entered our halls?’

“Sigurd stood forth boldly, exclaiming:

“‘I have come to do battle with the giant Menzogna, and to release his prisoners.’

“‘We have no one of that name here,’ said the king; but his eyes shifted uneasily, and he dared not look Sigurd in the face. ‘In whose name dost thou come?’

“‘In my ow—’ just then Sigurd remembered king Arthur’s warning, and pulling out his mirror, cried aloud: ‘In the name of my king, the champion of Truth.’

“What a scene! He flashed the wonderful mirror here and there, and the whole cave was changed. The false glaring lights went out, the wild music was turned into the wailing of imprisoned souls, the crown and mantle fell from off the king, and the

ugly giant Menzogna was revealed beneath ; the fine clothing shrivelled upon the guests, and they found they were bound with strong fetters of iron, which until now had been unfelt by them. The gay



laughter died away in sighs ; in all the palace was no ray of light, except those pure beams shed from Sigurd's wondrous mirror, which revealed all the sin and meanness and ugliness just as it was. Not an eye could look at that bright light, not a soul was

there who did not shrink as though it were the eye of God himself, not one, excepting only the youngest of the three sisters, who stood up pure and brave before it, and said :

“ ‘I felt the falseness,—I hated the bonds ; oh ! set us free, good knight.’

“Several of the oldest and most wicked of the men grouped round the giant, and said they would fight for and with him, and defied Sigurd ; but with his mirror in one hand and his sword in the other he was irresistible. He flashed its rays on his enemies, and they being dazzled fought wildly, whilst he, guided by its light, struck home every blow, and before an hour had passed Menzogna and all his lying partisans were slain.

“Then Sigurd called to him the captives, and led them out in a long file from the dark cave, showing them by the light of the mirror where to choose their path. Some disbelieving ones, who refused to be guided by him, would choose their own way, and refusing the narrow rocky path, which looked rugged and black in the moonlight, fell with a melancholy cry into the morass.

“All the fire of the red sunset had died out ; but the moon was shining calm and clear above, when the little band of prisoners stood safely outside the

rocky land of giant Menzogna. They rubbed their eyes and looked around in a bewildered manner, for they had so long lived in a false atmosphere that the true one seemed unreal to them, and felt as though they were still in a dream.

"Yet they seemed to have come unto a holy cool place from a feverish merriment. Only the youngest sister breathed freely, and clasping her hands, looked at the pale beautiful moon, sobbing :

"'Oh! the joy of seeing the true light once more,' then she sunk on her knees and kissed Sigurd's hand, sighing softly: 'Thanks to our deliverer.'

"From out the darkness of the wood came an echo to her gratitude, as the father of the three sisters hastened to embrace and welcome them to his heart again. He turned to Sigurd to thank him, and asked what he could give him in return for the rescue, but Sigurd would have no guerdon.

"'I have but performed my quest,' he said, 'and that not by myself; the mirror of Truth alone showed me the web of lies which are the veil of sin. Sinful pleasures are always false and bad, like the gay clothing and glare in the cavern; but they only hide the bonds and ugliness which are beneath them all the time.'

" 'I knew it, and felt the chain,' said the young girl.

" 'How did you know?' asked Sigurd, and as he looked he saw how pure and beautiful her face was.

"She pulled her blue cloak aside, and showed a little mirror on her heart.

" 'I followed my sisters because I loved them,' she said, 'and when we were in the cave my glass became blurred, and the false finery covered it so that it would no longer reflect clearly; but I had it on my heart all the time.'

" 'And have none of the others any mirrors?' asked Sigurd.

"One by one they showed their hearts, where the glasses were either broken or hidden or covered with rust, so that they heeded them not.

" 'He who hides or defies the light of conscience in his heart must needs fall into the hands of his enemies. Keep your mirrors pure, my friends, let truth illumine your path and conscience be your guide, so the dead giant shall harm you no more.'

"So saying, Sigurd left the prisoners whom he had released and rode away slowly in the moonlight; but he glanced back once and again at a slight figure clad in heavenly blue, which shone like a turquoise gem in the clear beams, and the maiden gazed

wistfully as the gleam of his casque faded in the mist of distance, like a star vanishing in space.

"He rode through the dark hours of night, and when the morning's sun was high he kneeled again before King Arthur on his golden throne.

"'Give me the mirror,' said the monarch, and he glanced into the transparent crystal and saw written there all that the knight had done. 'Thou hast performed thy quest well, ask now thy guerdon,' and Sigurd answered :

"'It is enough, oh king, that thou dost approve.'"

Instead of loud applause at the end of it, this story is greeted by a series of sighs, as if the audience have kept in their feelings so long that they were obliged to sigh them out at last.

The girls then ran up and all kissed their mother at once, till she seemed lost in wreathing arms.

"It is a beautiful story, mamsie," they said.

President, with a rather subdued manner "We thank the honorary member for her story." ("Hear, hear," from the usher.)

Hubert. "I second the motion." (Applause.)

As the club disperses, the president remains behind, and climbing in his mother's lap, whispers, "Mamie, did not you mean that story for me?"

"Yes, Freddie dear, I want you to be very brave in the cause of Truth, and to fight against evil, not only to win praise from people, but that the Great King may approve; do you understand?"

"Yes, mamie dear, I'll try;" and the chairman of the meeting went off to bed with something like a tear in his eye.





Evening Fourth.

THE STORIES OF ONDELLE AND OF "THE FATTEST MAN."



RESIDENT in a very loud voice announces :
"The next tale is called 'Ondelle,' and is written by Elderberry, M.B.S.C. Now, serious Miss Eldersister, let us hear what you have to say for yourself."

Hubert. "A fairy story, I'll assert, with a lot of impossibilities in it."

Sibyl, modestly. "It is a fairy story; but then, you know, Hubert, even fairy tales can teach people sometimes."

Harry. "Oh, it's a moral fairy tale, is it! worse and worse."

President, knocking his fist on the table. "Silence in the court; don't you see you fellows are making the reader blush?"

With rather a quiver in her voice Sibyl began to read.

“ONDELLE.

“Ondelle was staying in the mountains with her family, and had spent all the morning wandering about the hills with her butterfly-net. The grounds of the house where she was staying were very large



and wild; a rivulet ran through them, which came down from a rocky mountain behind the house. Ondelle was hot and tired, and this river looked so cool that she could not resist the temptation to take off her stockings and shoes, and sitting on a rock, let

the water ripple over her bare feet. It seemed to her as if the ripples sang a little song to her as they passed.

"All at once she felt a sharp twinge in her little white toe, and looking down she saw a curious figure clinging with both hands to her foot and trying to climb out of the water upon it. He was a tiny mannikin, about as tall as Ondelle's finger, and as he scrambled out of the waves the drops ran off his sparkling greeny-blue dress like diamonds. Ondelle sat quite motionless staring at him, till he cried in a shrill voice, 'Why don't you help me up instead of staring so, I want to talk to you.' So she held out the handle of her butterfly-net, and lifting him upon it, set him by her side on the rock; but she was so astonished that it was quite a minute before she could gasp out the question:

" 'Who—what are you?'

" 'What am I? well, I should think you could see that for yourself; what should I be but a river sprite?'

" 'Are you really?' cried Ondelle; 'then you are just the person I wanted to see,—you can tell me all about the river.'

"You must know that Ondelle was so used to fairy tales, and the ideas of sprites and elves were so often in her imagination, that the sight of one in reality was only a pleasant excitement to her.

“‘Of course I can tell you,’ said the sprite ; ‘I know every drop of water in the brook ; what do you want to know about it ?’

“‘First,’ said Ondelle, ‘I want you to tell me what the river sings about, that it is always crooning just like a nurse hushing a child to sleep ?’

“‘That is just what it is doing, only the babies in the river are the troubles of little children, which it is soothing to rest.’

“‘How curious !’ said Ondelle, ‘I thought there was something sad about the river ; is it all made of tears then ?’

“‘Yes, all of tears ; but there are two kinds of tears in it, false and real. They all go in together, but the water sprites know which is which, and the real tears that come out of suffering they send down deep into the heart of the river, and they go into the bosom of the great sea to be rocked to sleep ; but the false tears of naughty children—all those shed because little girls are cross, or obstinate, or discontented with their blessings, or cry because they won’t learn new lessons, or put on new boots, or eat good meat and potatoes—ah ! we sprites have fine fun over them ; we kick them about and toss them about from rock to rock till they are broken into flecks of foam, and go flying over the stones and

never reach the great sea at all. Eh !' laughed the sprite, 'what are you looking so red about ?'

"Ondelle was really blushing very much, for she knew that she often cried for nothing, so often indeed that her elder sisters had nicknamed her the 'perennial fountain.'

"'I don't believe a word of what you say,' she pouted ; 'some one has told you that I cry sometimes, and you are teasing me.'

"'Not at all, upon my honour. Come up the mountain to the place where the river rises, and you will soon see that it is all true ; you can carry me in your butterfly-net, see ! I am quite comfortable here,' and he got into the net and nestled down into the point of it. When Ondelle swung it over her shoulder, he was just even with the bow on the end of her long plait of hair, and when he wanted her to go to the right or left he pulled it. If it had been a boy, cousin, or brother who did so, Ondelle would most likely have cried ; but she wisely reasoned that one could not expect sprites to behave like human beings, and after his remarks she was afraid to let him see any tears.

"They went up the hill, Ondelle skipping lightly over the rocks and boulders, and clambering up among the ferny banks, where the river ran murmur-

ing amidst the green leaves and shining stones. On they went, up and up, till the river was quite a little brook, running over the white pebbles of a rocky slope, here and there tumbling into a waterfall, up the steep sides of which she climbed.

“‘What a noise the waterfall makes,’ exclaimed Ondelle.

“‘That is not only the waterfall, there are thousands of sprites shrieking with fun ; can you not see them ?’

“‘No, I see nothing but dancing water,’ said Ondelle, rubbing her eyes in hopes of making them clearer.

“‘Ah ! I forgot I have not opened your eyes.’

“‘They are already wide open,’ cried Ondelle, staring with all her might.

“‘Not open to fairy vision,’ said the sprite. ‘Just go and pluck a leaf of that oak-fern, it is a fairy plant,—you must dip it in the river where a sunbeam falls and wash your eyes with it.’

“Ondelle did as she was bid, and lo ! the effect was marvellous ; instead of merely the water rushing over the jagged rocks, she saw thousands of sprites leaping and dancing about over the dripping stones, now riding down on a rush of water, then kicking up the flecks of foam till they flew in the air like

butterflies; they kept shouting, screaming, laughing, their voices mingling till they made a continuous noise. Ondelle stood entranced, watching them in the greatest wonder. At first she was too bewildered to distinguish any especial figures, it all looked one bright mass of confusion. But soon she noticed three merry little fellows dressed in green-blue tunics, sparkling all over like diamonds; they had the most laughable faces you ever saw, and their eyes were like dew-drops with the sun in them. They were dancing on a wet stone near her, eagerly watching some insect flying up the dell by which she had come. When it came near it proved to be a dragon-fly with a curious jar hung round its neck, like the flower of the pitcher plant. 'Come along, Libellula,' cried the three sprites, 'you have a play-thing for us we can see. What have you in the pitcher?'

"The dragon-fly came near, and allowed the sprites to take its load, and then began to laugh. 'Ah! it is full of such ridiculous tears; a foolish little girl at the hotel shed enough to make a waterfall, all because there was mutton for lunch instead of beef; and again because she wanted to wear her best frock to wander about the grounds.'

"'Ah! ha!' grinned the sprites; 'give us the

pitcher, we'll teach her what such tears as those are good for.'

"'But I don't like the smell of mutton, and my frock hurts my arms, it is too small,' and Ondelle wriggled her arms in the sleeves and began to cry again; she knew quite well that they talked about her.

"No sooner did the tears begin to fall than the dragon-fly brushed them off her cheeks with its gauzy wings, and dropped them cleverly into the flower-pitcher, while the sprites danced again. 'Hurrah!' they screamed, 'this *is* fun, some really fresh cry-baby tears, they generally get here quite stale.'

"With a great effort, and feeling angry and ashamed, Ondelle dried her eyes and ceased to cry. She was very much inclined to run away, but yet she could not help staying to see what became of her unlucky tears.

"Off went the three sprites, toiling under the weight of the tear-jar; and as soon as they reached the edge of the rock they poured out the contents into the brook. Imagine Ondelle's surprise to see her tears quite whole, and turned into crystal balls, so that though they looked like water they were quite distinct from the other drops. Down plunged the sparkling little men, and the game began. One tossed up a glittering ball, crying:

“‘Here is a fine mutton tear—mutton,—ah, ha! mutton tear; suppose she were starving, would she give us mutton tears?’ and then they kicked the ball about so much that it fell on a stone and broke into a thousand pieces and became foam; then, heigho! how they blew the bits about, and tossed them at each other like snowballs, shouting, ‘Ah! ha! that’s the end of a mutton tear.’ Next they caught up another ball, and cried, ‘Catch a nice clean frock tear, quite a good frock; but it wasn’t her best frock, and so she cried. Wouldn’t she cry if she had no frock at all—heigho! the ridiculous nice frock tear, come and roll it down the waterfall; it is such a big tear, we can all ride on it at once,—oh, what fun!’

“You see sprites are very aggravating, and nothing delights them as much as jeering and making fun of people. Poor Ondelle stood on the brink, and felt burning with shame, yet she could not go away till the sprites had ridden down the waterfall on the crystal ball; and when it broke into foam they leaped up ever so high with the bits of it again.

“Then another dragon-fly came with a pitcher-flower, and three pretty gentle fairies in sky blue and pearly dresses waited for it.

“‘Take it gently,’ sighed the dragon-fly, ‘it is

full of very sad tears indeed ; it has been so heavy to carry.'

" ' Whose are they ? ' "

" ' They were shed by a poor little girl who lives in a cottage near the great hotel ; her mother died last night, and her father beat her this morning because she had no breakfast ready ; the poor child has no frock to wear and nothing to eat. ' "

" ' I know the little girl, ' cried Ondelle, then she stopped suddenly, blushing, for she had spoken very unkindly when the child had asked for food as Ondelle passed eating a large piece of cake.

" ' The gentle fairies took up the pitcher and carried it softly to a water-staircase, which looked to Ondelle like a whirlpool, as she saw the three blue sprites going round and round in it with their burden, down and down, singing a sweet sad song till they got to the deepest depths.

" ' They carry it down there so that the surface sprites, who are very mischievous, shall not get hold of it and make sport of the tears of woe. They will be carried along in the calm deep waters till they reach the ocean of God's mercy, and there they are rocked to sleep for ever, like the troubles themselves, ' explained a little green-robed sprite who stood near Ondelle.

"Ondelle felt the tears coming into her own eyes, but feared to let them drop ; one fell, however, and the dragon-fly brushed it off, giving it to a pretty little green sprite, who carried it and laid it on a daisy.

"‘Tears of pity are the dew on the flowers of kindness,’ said the dragon-fly, and just then everything seemed to fade away, and Ondelle found herself sitting with her feet dangling in the water, just as when the mannikin first found her.

"Had it been a dream or a vision, or had it really happened ? perhaps the oak-fern dipped in sunlit water only keeps its power a short time. Ondelle never knew ; but her sisters found she cried so much less, and smiled so much oftener, that instead of calling her the ‘perennial fountain,’ they named her ‘everlasting sunbeam,’ and her mother was surprised by her asking if she might give her old frock to the poor little girl in the cottage. She also noticed that when Ondelle had any cake given to her she always carried it out of the house, and I think that poor little girl could tell who eat it, don’t you ?”

All the girls applaud very much except Elsie, whose eyes are filled with tears, and she whispers to Minna :

"I know Sibyl meant that story for me,—it's too bad of her;" and Minna whispers back:

"She meant it to do you good, and you know, Elsie, you do cry a great deal."

Harry. "Well, where's the moral of that story, I should like to know?"

Hubert. "Never blub unless you have a grievance worth blubbing for; isn't that it, Elsie? you seem to know."

Elsie, winking her tears back. "I do not know, I'm not crying for anything."

President. "No, you never do, it generally is for nothing;" here Elsie looks so very distressed that the president thinks it better to change the subject by drawing another manuscript, on which he reads: "'The Fattest Man,' by Blackberry, M.B.S.C. Elsie's own, I declare; this is going to be a funny one I see by the title."

Elsie, blushing. "Let some one else read it; I am shy."

Mr. Berrie offers his arm to lead her to the chair, but Elsie still draws back.

"I can't read it myself, I am afraid you will laugh at me,—you read it for me, papa."

So Mr. Berrie acts as proxy, and reads, while Elsie sits with her face hidden in her mother's lap.

"THE FATTEST MAN.

"There was once a man who wanted to be very rich, but as it happened he was very poor. One night he dreamed that a fairy told him if he got fat he would make his fortune, but he did not believe it. Still the dream haunted him so that he could not rest; he tried to get it out of his head, but the wish to be rich was too strong for him. So one day he went to an astrologer to ask his fortune, and would you believe it, the man said the very same as the dream, that nothing would make him rich but getting fat.

"So he determined he *would* get fat if it cost him his life. Well, he began to eat and eat, till he could eat no longer. He had to buy things that would stuff him well, like rice and oatmeal porridge, for he had not enough money to buy a lot of meat and other things. After a little while he got so fat that his clothes would not fit him any more, and that was another trouble, for if he had to buy coats often he would not have enough to buy food, and then when he was fat it took so much more stuff to make his suits that it was very expensive work. But again the thought of being rich came to comfort him, and he went bravely to the bank and took out all

the money he had. Then he went with a sad heart to the stuff shop, and bought a beautiful big piece of cloth with a great pattern upon it, and had it made into a great large suit, ever so much bigger than his fatness at that time, because he expected to grow much more; then he felt pleased with himself, and went to bed.

“Next morning he found that, having had a good supper, he had really grown fatter, and his new clothes just fitted him. At last he was such a size that he could not walk, and then he thought he must be fat enough to make his fortune. But the fortune did not seem to come, and as he was sitting in his chair he felt very lonely, and asked a boy to run and fetch a newspaper. The boy went, and when he came back the man began to read it, and what do you think was printed in the paper? It was this: ‘The royal KING will give a prize to the *fattest man* in this town, who will be greatly *rewarded*.’

“Oh how joyful he was when he heard that! he dressed himself in his best, and toddled away as fast as his fatness would let him.

“When he reached the show place he found a lot of people all round in circles, and in the middle were about nine *great BIG FAT* men all in a row.

"When the people saw him they all began to shout: 'That's him! that's him!'

"At last he understood what they meant, as you, good readers, have already guessed. He had got the prize! The king rewarded him, and made him rich for all his life. But when he got rich he also got thinner, and was very happy." (Chorus of laughter.)

Harry. "That is a queer story and no mistake, to make a fellow get rich by idleness and gluttony."

Sibyl. "It was his fate, you see, both the dream and the astrologer told him so."

Mrs. Berrie. "I do not think you can get much morality out of that tale."

Elsie, lifting a blushing face. 'I wrote it for its funniness, not for preaching."

Mr. Berrie. "And very funny it is, my dear. Where could you have got such a droll idea?"

Hubert. "I think the author should study English grammar a little; some of her sentences would be very difficult to parse."

Minna. "But you cannot expect us children to write like grown-up people."



Evening Fifty.

TWO ADVENTUROUS STORIES.



HIS evening Minna is called to the author's chair, for the story drawn first is hers. "Mine is a fairy story," she says, looking at her brother Hubert, "so you must not expect it to be like life. There is one part that will make you laugh."

"Don't praise your own things," remarks Harry, "if you do nobody else will take the trouble to do it for you."

"I was not praising it, I was only—"

"Never mind, go on. What is it called?" interrupts her brother impatiently.

"It is called—'Bright Moon in Search of a Fortune,' by Raspberry, M.B.S.C."

"Is Bright Moon a little boy or a girl?" asks Lollie.

"A boy, of course."

"What a name to give a fellow; I dare say he's a moonstruck sort of a chap," laughs Harry.

Says the secretary, reading from the rules: "Resolution IV. says no discussion is to be allowed during the readings. Harry, shut up."



"All right, I am silent," replies the court-usher, shutting his mouth so very tight that it seems as though he would find it hard to open it again.

Silence being thus procured, Minna begins to read as follows:

"There was once upon a time a little boy called BRIGHT MOON. He lived in an old hut all black

with smoke ; his father treated him very badly and his mother the same ; he had nothing but a dry crust to eat and water to drink. He got tired of this after a time, and one night, when every one was asleep, he said to himself, 'I will go and find my fortune,' so he got up, took a large coloured handkerchief, put his clothes in it (that is the luggage poor people always travel with, you know), and with his dry crust in his pocket, he started, and went away towards the great forest just as the clock struck twelve. He walked in the dark till half-past four, when seeing a little light he went towards it, saying, 'Here is a shelter for me.' He rang the bell, and the door was opened by a graceful little woman, who said, smiling, 'Good morning, sir ; my mistress is expecting you ; please come into the drawing-room. Will you change your clothes before you have your breakfast ?'

"Bright Moon thought a little, and then said he would ; so she led him through lots of rooms, one full of lovely musical instruments, and another of pretty pictures. At last they reached a bedroom with a wardrobe of lovely clothes, out of which the servant took a prince's dress—knickerbockers, jacket, and waistcoat all trimmed with a gold border. He *did* feel grand when he had them on. Then the servant showed him into the drawing-room,

where a lovely lady sat in an arm-chair. She was twice as pretty as the servant, and when she saw Bright Moon she got up and said, 'Oh, dear Bright Moon, how glad I am that you are come! I was in half-mourning for you, for I thought you were either lost or beaten to death by your father and mother. Excuse me, I will change my dress directly, for I cannot bear to stay in mourning without need,' and she went away ever so fast. In a little time she came back in a beautiful white dress trimmed with gold, and she was lovelier than ever.

" 'I am sorry to disturb you, madam,' said Bright Moon politely.

" 'Oh, please do not call me madam, my name is Ethelinda.'

"It took him some time to learn such a curious name, and at last he said, 'Ethelinda, may I ask you a favour?'

" 'Certainly.'

" 'Can you tell me where I could find my fortune?'

" 'Yes. Do you know where Mount Essaia is?'

" 'I think I do.'

" 'If you don't, you can go to the city of Essaia and ask some one there. You must go straight up the mountain, and almost at the top you will find a

large rock; on the rock the moss has grown into letters, which mean "Fortune to Bright Moon;" it is fairy language, so of course you can't understand it.'

"'Oh, how nice! how nice!' he cried, clapping his hands.

"'Bright Moon, do you know it is dinner-time? you have spent some hours here talking; come and dine,' said Ethelinda.

"'Thank you, Ethelinda, it is so long since I have eaten anything but dry crusts.'

"So they passed through the beautiful rooms again, till they reached a dining-room, where he enjoyed a lovely dinner. There were stuffed turkeys and nice green peas, and cream tarts, all fat with the lot of cream inside them. When he had finished, Ethelinda said she was very sorry that he must go, and then told him: 'You must take two bags, one of clothes and one of food, and be sure and remember this: always do just the contrary to what the people say inside the rock; if you do so all will go well,—mind, *do exactly the contrary, and you will be happy.*' He said 'Thank you' and 'Good-bye' and went off. After some time he reached the city of Essaia, where he met a man, and asked the way to Mount Essaia.

“ ‘A mile the other side of the town, that way,’ said the man, pointing to the west.

“He walked a mile, and he walked two miles, and then asked another man. ‘Oh,’ said he, ‘you will have to walk some miles to get there, it is ten miles from here by the east.’

“ ‘Why, *goodness gracious!*’ cried Bright Moon, ‘is there not a nearer way? it is almost dark.’

“The man said ‘No’ and went away; so poor Bright Moon walked on bravely, and late at night he reached the mountain, but was so tired that he lay down at the foot and went to sleep. When he awoke he found a stick beside him, so he took it and went up the hill. Before long he reached the rock, and there were the same letters Ethelinda had shown him. Oh! how glad he was to have got to it. There was a mark on the rock, which he pushed with his stick and it opened, and he saw a beautiful staircase. He walked in, and at the end he found a dear little girl, so pretty that he fell in love with her, and thought, ‘I will marry her when I am big.’

“She said to him: ‘Don’t come; I’m not called Bice; mother does not want you.’

“Down he went, and Bice took him by the hand and led him to a door, which she opened, saying, ‘Hated mother, there is no one, you don’t see a little



boy,' and her mother answered, 'I don't see an ugly little boy. Do not take him to the kitchen, and give him no food.'

" 'I have some, thank you,' said Bright Moon.

" 'He has not had a long journey, and does not want any,' said the lady to Bice.

" All at once he remembered he was told to do the contrary, so he followed Bice, and she took him to the kitchen, and asked :

" 'Which do you not want, cold chicken or beef?'

" He said beef, and she gave him a nice fowl all full of stuffing, which was just what he wanted. Bice took a knife and cut the fowl in two, and gave him half, and took the rest herself. He took big mouthfuls like this  and she little tit-bits like this .

" He felt so tired and sleepy after all that fowl that he yawned, and said :

" 'Please, I don't want to go to bed, for I'm not a bit tired.' It was very impertinent of him, but he thought little enough about manners when he was so weary.

" She took him to a plain little bedroom, not a bit like the one in Ethelinda's house; but he did

not care much about it, for all he thought of, was that he was going to find his fortune.

"Next morning he woke up feeling as happy as I am; he had slept like a top. Then he dressed himself, and felt as hungry as a beggar, so he opened his bag and eat some bread and bacon, and one of Ethelinda's cream tarts—'twasn't as good as the ones he had eaten at her house, because it had got squashed in the bag. While he was eating, there came a gruff voice at the door, that said :

" 'Don't wake up, you beggar, rascal, butter-fingers, and don't come with me.'

"Bright Moon knew the upside-down language by this time, and answering :

" 'I'm not dressed, and shall not come,' he opened the door directly, and there he saw a dreadful young man with a stick and two horns. The man took him down to the ground-floor, and there was a stable with fifty-nine horses, three carts, and two carriages, and he said :

" 'Now you must not clean these every day, every one of them, if you do my mistress, Mrs. Work-a-bobbin, will not beat you.'

" 'All right,' said Bright Moon, 'I don't want to clean them, I am sure.'

"So he idled about, and just did nothing till the

evening, when the dreadful young man came, and seeing the stables all dirty, looked very fierce and angry, and crying :

“‘So you have cleaned the stables, you obedient boy?’

“‘No, I haven’t, you told me not.’

“‘Now you are not telling lies; do not come this moment to Mrs. Work-a-bobbin.’

“‘I don’t want to,’ said Bright Moon, who had forgotten the language of contraries.

“On this the young man pushed him roughly in front of him, and drove him with his stick into the room where Mrs. Work-a-bobbin sat nodding her head over her knitting.

“The young man said: ‘This dear, delightful, good boy has cleaned all the horses and stables.’

“‘No, madam, I have not, because he told me not to,’ said Bright Moon.

“‘No lies again,’ cried the dreadful young man, stamping in rage. He gave his big stick to Mrs. Work-a-bobbin, who beat poor Bright Moon till he was obliged to cry out. Then she put him in the corner, and saying :

“‘You are not to stay there all the evening, till you learn not to be obedient,’ she sat down again to nod her old head over her knitting.

"Very much puzzled, Bright Moon was going away, when she shook her fist at him, crying angrily :

"'Did I tell you not to stay there? don't go back this moment, or I shall not beat you harder than ever.'

"'How is a boy to know what to do?' muttered Bright Moon, when all at once he remembered that Ethelinda had told him to be sure and say and do the contrary to all they told him, and then he knew he was expected to clean the stables every day.

"So the next morning he got up early and began ; he had work enough to do now, and he went on quite steadily till a year was over. By that time he felt so miserable that he thought he would like to go and see Ethelinda. Fortunately it was New Year's day, and Mrs. Work-a-bobbin called all the servants, and said :

"'I have not got anything to tell you, because you have not been here a year. To-day is not New Year's day, so you must not all go away, so I do not say good-bye.'

"Bright Moon, who understood the topsy-turvy language by this time, was glad enough ; he went directly to his room, packed up his two bags, and went away to Ethelinda

"She received him with great joy, and he said: 'I have not found my fortune yet, Ethelinda, and they have sent me away.'

"'It is their way,' she answered; 'they have servants every other year, and you must wait twenty years, working as you have been doing, and the times you are away you may come always to me.'

"Bright Moon thanked her, and they stayed together all the year; and when he went back to Essaia again he found that Mrs. Work-a-bobbin was dead, so that Bice ruled the house.

"He was glad, because Bice was very kind to him. Twenty years passed away very quickly, and at the end of them Bright Moon said one morning:

"'Dear Bice, will you marry me?'

"Bice said 'yes,' for he had taught her to speak properly, and they lived happily till the end of their lives; so Bright Moon found his fortune by marrying her."

"That is all," says Minna, shutting up her book.

"What an upside-down sort of a story," exclaims Harry, who likes to tease his sister. "Nobody seems to say what they mean."

Mr. Berrie. "A capital satire on society, Minna."

Minna. "I don't know what you mean by a satire, uncle."

President. "A satyr is a creature that lives in the woods; don't you know that, Minna? he has long ears and goat's legs."

Secretary, laughing. "The president is about as wise as the author. A satyr is a creature that went out of fashion with the ancient Greeks, though Minna's horned young man seems one of the species. A satire is a way of taking off one's neighbours."

Minna. "Then mine is not a satire, for I did not mean to take off any one."

Mr. Berrie. "No, my dear, I am sure you did not. I only meant to say that your contrary language was a little like the falseness of the world and society, which often thinks one thing and says another."

Mrs. Berrie. "I must praise Minna's good moral. She proves that if one wants to get a fortune, he must work steadily and earnestly for it, and that the best of wealth is that which is the reward of constant labour, and the best happiness the reward of constant and true love."

Minna, looking very much astonished. "I did not know all that was in my story, and never thought of any moral at all."

Harry. "You are a Solomon in spite of yourself, it appears."

Lollie. "You mean like the Queen of Sheba, she cannot be Solomon because he was a man."

Harry. "It is you who are the Queen of Sheba, for I am sure you are very much in need of knowledge."

By the time the laugh which followed this is over, the president has taken another manuscript from the box, and seeing his own writing, jumps out of his chair and on to that of the reader in one marvellous leap, crying:

"Hurrah! it's my turn now. Listen, everybody, this is the story of 'Sydney's Adventures, or a Tale of a Runaway,' by Gooseberry, M.S.C., author of 'The Adventures of Six Children who went to the Moon,' with Illustrations by the author."

Harry. "Dear me, here's a flourish! We shall expect something worth hearing after all this, Mr. Ex-president," and Harry coolly seats himself in the president's chair, where he leans back till the cocked hat is pushed down over his nose, on which he takes it off, and flinging it in the style of a circus clown, it falls precisely on the curly head of Dollie, and extinguishes her little round face. Meanwhile Freddie has begun.

CHAPTER I.

TELLING HOW SYDNEY, A THOUGHTLESS BOY, RAN
AWAY FROM HOME.

"THERE was once, in 1794, a boy who had lived happily at home all his life, until one day he began to read a book of sea adventures, and then a great wish to go to sea came over him; and when he had finished the book he made up his mind to run away to sea.

"The boy's name was Sydney; he was twelve years old, but a very thoughtless boy; he was strong, and pretty tall for his age, and had two good qualities,—he was brave and independent.

"One day he went to his father (who was very rich indeed), and said: 'Dear papa, I want to go for a week's excursion alone in the world—will you give me £10 for it?'

"His father laughed, and asked: 'What do you want to do alone in the world for a week?'

"'I want to enjoy myself all by myself.'

"The mother and father consulted together, and

at last agreed to let him have his wish, and they gave him £10.

"Then he asked if he could have a boat to sail in the lake near them; it was not a very big lake, only about six miles round.

"Sydney's father said: 'I will give you another sixty pounds or so, so that you can buy what you like in the way of a boat.'

"'Oh thank you, dear papa!' said Sydney.

"So Sydney had now seventy pounds all for himself, and on Monday morning he said good-bye to his parents. They smiled rather to see such a little fellow going about alone in the world for a week. It was certainly not a very long time.

"But now I will tell you something. Sydney did not at all intend to have only a week's journey; he meant to run away, and perhaps never come back again.

"His father was owner of a great ship called the 'Perseverance.' This ship was going to Cape Horn on Thursday at exactly two o'clock in the afternoon, and Sydney intended to go in her. She was in charge of a man called Penellan, who was a very good sailor indeed; he was strong and kind, and a great friend of Sydney's father.

"It was then Tuesday, so he had two more days before the ship sailed. He went to buy a boat, and got one a little bigger than a canoe. It cost him £18 10s. 6d., so out of his £60 he had now £41 9s. 6d. left to do what he liked with. The boat was four yards long by two feet six inches wide. It had a nice rudder, two oars, three seats, and good sails, with a nice 'Union Jack' at the top of the mast. At the end of the boat was a sort of cupboard, rather small, but it did very well to put things in, so he filled it with all he wanted, such as 'sea story books, provisions, &c.'

"At a quarter to two on Thursday he left the hotel, where he had stayed two days, and went to the harbour to get into his boat and row to the ship, but what was his disgust to find the ship was gone.

CHAPTER II.

TELLING HOW SYDNEY GOT ON BOARD THE SHIP 'PERSEVERANCE.'

"SYDNEY was as if stunned, and asked an old lame French soldier (who was dressed in blue and red, as all French soldiers are) if the 'Perseverance' had really started.

“‘Yes, it has; there it is,’ he said in English, pointing to a sail about two miles off; ‘it has sailed sooner than it should have done.’

“Sydney jumped into his boat directly; he could row very well, so as the ship was going slowly and he very fast, he of course gained on it, and in half an hour’s time found he was only a mile away. He said to himself, ‘In another half an hour I will be there.’

“Ten minutes after this he stopped his boat, because he wanted to put up his sails and his flag to make the boat go faster; but in doing so he lost his balance and fell in the sea. Very fortunately he could swim, which was a great help in a circumstance like that. He soon got into the boat again, and began rowing as fast as ever, though he was very wet.

“In a quarter of an hour he was half a mile away from the ship, and in another quarter he was very near it indeed. In about another minute he reached the ship.

“The sailors threw him a rope, and he climbed up very quickly; then they took up his boat and put it in a safe place.

“After talking a bit to themselves, the sailors took him down to the captain’s cabin. When he had looked at him for a short time, Penellan said:

“ ‘Well, my young friend, what is your name ?’

“ ‘Sydney Neville.’

“ ‘Is your father a merchant ?’

“ ‘Yes, he is.’

“ ‘Oh dear me ! I know him then quite well, he is the owner of this ship, of which I am in charge ; but how did you come here and why ?’

“ ‘I came in a boat which I bought, and I want to go to Cape Horn with you ; at the end of the journey I will pay you for it.’

“ ‘Oh, you need not trouble about that,’ said the good old sailor ; ‘but how did you get so wet ?’

“ ‘I fell off the boat as I was coming,’ replied Sydney, going away.

“That night Sydney slept in a hammock, and when he got up at seven in the morning he asked the first sailor he met, ‘Where is the room in which we have meals ?’

“So he showed him a nice hall, in which was a round table with a lot of merry sailors having breakfast, and Captain Penellan at the top. Sydney was placed next to him, and had a good breakfast of bread-and-butter, some nice sailor’s cake, and tea. All day he amused himself by looking at all parts of the ship and talking to the men. Soon a man came up the stairs with a saw and hammer and a

few nails in his hand, who said, 'Hullo, me young lad, how does you feel to-day?'

" 'Very well, thanks.'

" 'I is glad to hear it.'

" 'How long shall we be getting to Cape Horn?' asked Sydney.

" 'Oh, another five weeks or so, me young lad.' This man turned out to be the carpenter, who had to mend the ship when it was out of order.

" He now had to mend a hole in the prow of the ship, which was no bigger than four inches. After watching him, Sydney went to his cabin to fetch one of his books, which was called, 'The Naval Officer.'

" He stayed on deck reading till the dinner-bell rang. After dinner he amused himself by looking at the interesting things which they passed, such as sharks, sea-gulls, sea-weeds, very seldom whales, &c., &c. Later in the afternoon a ship was seen, which was going to San Francisco Bay. The ship had started just two hours before them. This was very interesting to Sydney indeed.

CHAPTER III.

TELLING HOW SYDNEY CAME IN SIGHT OF CAPE
HORN AFTER A LONG JOURNEY.

“FOUR weeks had passed in this manner, when Penellan gave notice that they would reach Cape Horn in five days more. In these five days the journey was very adventurous. On the first day, which was Monday, at four o'clock in the morning, a great ship was seen about seventy yards in front of them, which was making straight for the ‘Perseverance.’ On that unfortunate morning there was an extremely thick fog, so they had not seen the ship before it was seventy yards in front. In that short distance they had not room or time to turn the ship round out of the way, and it became evident that a great collision was going to take place. Every one was on deck except the captain and four of the crew. Sydney was also on deck, and he was shivering as if he was being frozen to death. Three sailors flung themselves from the ship’s sides and swam for their lives. Other five climbed up the masts as fast as ever they could; it certainly was not the most advisable thing to do, for they might be knocked off by the shock. Others rushed down to their cabins.

The men of the other ship also were alarmed at so unexpected a collision. They naturally tried to do the best they could to save themselves.

“Before Sydney could have counted forty, after the ships had seen each other, a most fearful collision took place. The bowsprit of the strange ship (which was called the ‘Great Alexander’) was knocked clean off, and a great hole was made near the keel of the ship, through which the water immediately ran in. The hole was soon after well mended. The ‘Alexander’ also lost two of her men, who were leaning over the railing, and were knocked over by the shock.

“The ‘Perseverance’ was not much injured,—the bowsprit split a good bit at the end, and one of the men who had climbed up the mast fell down and was very seriously injured. Sydney was knocked down, but was let off with a certainly not very agreeable bruise on his forehead. The ships went on after mending the injuries done in the collision. Nothing else happened that day worth mentioning.

“The next day, Tuesday, nothing happened; but the third day there was a tremendous gale of wind. It was all for the best, because it was favourable, and made the ‘Perseverance’ go so fast that Penellan thought they would get to Cape Horn on the evening of the fourth day. On Wednesday they saw a ship a

long way off, which was burning. The blaze grew bigger and bigger; it lasted a long time, till they thought it was burnt down. On Thursday nothing happened, except that near the close of day a sailor climbed to the mast-head, and what was the surprise of all when he called out, 'Land ahead!'

CHAPTER IV.

TELLING HOW SYDNEY GOT TO CAPE HORN AFTER BEING SHIPWRECKED.

"THE minute Sydney heard the man shout 'Land ahead' he jumped for joy. Penellan said they would reach there in two hours' time. It was now seven o'clock. Eight o'clock came, and the land became very misty. The sea was now quite calm and smooth.

"At the exact minute of nine o'clock, before any of them knew where they were, they had struck against a rock, and the ship went to pieces suddenly, most of the men being drowned, except Sydney, Penellan, and four others. Captain Penellan clung to a piece of wood, but Sydney dexterously put his boat (which had been all the time on board) into the sea and got into it. He could not see very well, but he rowed towards what he thought was land.

"Before a space of ten minutes had passed he

struck against a rock, and had to swim for his life ; but his boat was lost and all his things in it. He swam on until he gave himself up for lost, his arms and legs being quite tired, when all of a sudden he heard some one shouting, 'Sydney ! Sydney ! my dear boy.' He looked around, and what was his surprise to see Penellan and a big log of wood, to which he was clinging. Sydney swam towards the log, but before he had gone half way his strength failed him and he fainted.

"When he woke he found himself sitting upon a rock, with Penellan looking at him, and four sailors around him, of which one was Jack the carpenter. They had almost reached Cape Horn, but had lost all their comrades, and all their provisions and possessions. They looked across to the mainland, it was not very far, but too far to swim in their exhausted state. How should they reach it ? Sydney looked up and saw something black on the shore ; all at once he jumped up, and crying, 'It is my boat,' he ran to pull it in, and all the men followed.

" 'There is only a little plank broken,' said Penellan when he had overhauled her.

" 'I can easily stop that,' cried Jack, pulling some nails out of his trousers' pocket ; 'there are plenty of bits of wood floating.'

"So he set to work, and early next morning they rowed across to the mainland, and thus they reached Cape Horn."

Harry. "And then?"

Freddie. "There's no more. I got tired of writing, or else I meant to tell how they fought the savages and got possession of a village, and learned to shoot game with arrows like the natives, till an English ship took them home again."

Mr. Berrie. "We can see who is your favourite author, my boy." (To his wife) "It is a capital imitation of Jules Verne."

Hubert. "I think it is awfully unlikely,—first the father was as great a simpleton as the boy, and—how can you have a round table with the captain at the top, eh?"

Harry. "And nice sailor's cake, ha! ha! you had just better go to sea yourself, and eat mouldy biscuit that you have to chop with a hatchet."

Hubert. "And then Master Sydney's gymnastics with his boat—bosh!"

Chorus of girls. "Never mind what the boys say, Freddie, it is a very good story, and the shipwreck is very exciting; you should have finished it though."

Harry, slyly, seeing Freddie likes this praise.

"Don't think too much of the girls' opinion, old boy ; I have heard you say yourself they never understand anything."

Mrs. Berrie (to console her crest-fallen boy). "I propose a vote of thanks to the president for his very exciting story."

A round of applause quite brought back the sparkle into Freddie's eyes.

Mr. Berrie (to his wife). "A greater tissue of irrational improbabilities was never strung together ; but I suppose one cannot expect wisdom from a boy of eight years old, who has been fed upon fairy tales and Jules Verne."





Ebening Sixth.

MR. BERRIE'S MS., "THE FAIRY AMALTHEA."



THE president having drawn from the box a very large MS., hands it to his father. "Now, papa, it is your turn. I knew all the time that this large parcel was yours, and left it that we might have a good one for the last."

Hubert. "What is it called?"

Mr. Berrie. "The Fairy Amalthea."

Hubert, in a disappointed tone. "Well, uncle, I did not think we should have had a fairy tale from you."

Mr. Berrie. "It is not a story at all. You know,

children, you have often asked me to write a play for you to act on Sibyl's birthday, so I have written this, which I will read instead of a story, and if you like it you may learn and act it."

Half-a-dozen voices at once. "A play written expressly for us! oh, how very nice! Thank you, thank you, dear papa."

Hubert (solo). "A fairy play may suit the children, but *I* shan't care much about it."

Harry. "If there is a prince in it, I'll act, or I would even take the part of demon."

Secretary, knocking the table. "Attention! attention! Let the author be heard."

Mr. Berrie reads—

THE FAIRY AMALTHEA.

A PLAY FOR CHILDREN.

IN THREE ACTS.

BY H. BERRIE, H.M.B.S.C.

ACT I.

1ST SCENE.—*A cottage interior; two sisters at work, Felicia making bread, Cornelia winding wool.*

Cornelia. "This life is perfectly insupportable. I can stand it no longer. Since our poor father died we have never had a moment's peace,—stitch, stitch, stitch, spin, spin, spin, from morning till night, and

aunt never contented after all; she might at least let us have a rest sometimes."

Felicia. "Dear Cornelia, pray think a little; if aunt had not given us a home we might have died of hunger in the streets, for father left us nothing but his debts."

Cornelia (with scorn). "A fine inheritance indeed. But you are always so meek, Felicia, and submit too much to other people's whims. I never will be the slave of any one, aunt or not. Is it likely that after being accustomed to have servants at my command, to wear jewels and handsome dresses, I should allow a woman who has not even a maid-of-all-work to order me about? No, that I won't, there. [*She breaks the wool in her energy.*] Now only see, that is the tenth time this nasty wool has broken; it is rotten wool, *there!*"

[*She flings away the ball in disdain.*]

Felicia. "Of course the wool breaks if you pull it in that manner, and pray remember, Cornelia, poor aunt sent away her servant to be able to take us in, she has indeed done her best. [*Picks up the ball.*] Now, dear, take your wool and go on winding, you know Aunt Martha wants to finish her stocking, she feels the cold so much."

Cornelia takes the wool, pouting, and pulls out her handkerchief to wipe the flour off it. "What dirty

hands you have, Felicia ; I don't understand how you can like to do such low work."

Felicia. "If I did not make the bread, what would you have to eat to-morrow, I wonder? I wish the loaf were larger, that is all. Oh, Cornelia, suppose a fairy should come in and change it into a good large batch, would not that be nice?"

Cornelia. "The very thing I was thinking. There *are* fairies, so they say, why shouldn't they help us? They could make us rich as Rothschilds, or dress us like queens, or give us princes for husbands,—oh, they could do *anything*!"

Felicia. "If they *would*; but I do not know where we could even *see* a fairy."

Cornelia (leading her forward and speaking mysteriously). "I can tell you, we must burn either an owl's feather or a dog's hair. [*Sounds of knocking at the door.*] Oh, what's that?—who is there?"

Old Woman. "A poor old woman, who asks alms for the love of God."

Cornelia (crossly). "Go away, we have nothing to give."

Felicia flings a cloth over her bread, and opens the door. "Come in, good woman; it is true we have little to give, but you can at least rest awhile; you look tired."

Cornelia (aside to her sister). "Why are you always so free with all the old hags of the country?—this one is a perfect witch."

Felicia (aside). "Hush! *Cornelia*; good manners cost us little, and indeed they are the only legacy we have from our past nobility."

Cornelia (shrugging her shoulders). "Do as you please, but I can tell you *I* am not going to sit down with that old creature." [Exit.

Old Woman (with an ironical smile). "Your sister is a fine young lady, miss."

Felicia. "Yes, *Cornelia* has always been much admired for her beauty."

Old Woman. "Ah! my dear young lady, beauty is not everything in this world; there is such a thing as goodness."

Felicia. "That is true; but do not judge *Cornelia* from her behaviour just now, she has been much disturbed, and feels our misfortunes bitterly. We were talking of fairies, and of how we could see them."

Old Woman. "Nothing is easier. Do you not know the Fairy *Amalthea*?"

Felicia. "I have heard her name, but have never seen her."

Old Woman. "Listen: the first evening of the

full moon you must go to the little house under the great oak in the forest, where three roads meet."

Felicia. "I know—I know the place exactly."

Old Woman. "Well, behind the hut is a rock, on the rock an ivy plant; take your scissors and cut off three leaves, neither more nor less, then wait."

Felicia. "Is it really true? but how do you know?—who are you?"

Old Woman. "An old woman, as you see, miss; but old women sometimes know a thing or two [nodding], you'll see. Good-bye, miss, and thank you kindly,—good luck to your kneading when you put the bread in the oven [*she waves her stick over the bread, and then shakes it over the wool-winder, adding*], and to you what you deserve." [Exit.]

Felicia uncovers her bread to put it in the oven, but starts back amazed to find three loaves instead of one. "Oh, how wonderful! what do I see? three loaves, and I only made one!"

Enter Cornelia in great haste.

Cornelia. "What is it, Felicia? what has that old hag been doing to you? I told you not to be so—[*looks in the pan and starts back*]*—why, what does it mean?*"

Felicia (*nodding*). "Yes, Cornelia, this time my courtesy has won the day,—it was really a fairy."

[*Puts her bread in the oven.*]

Cornelia. "A fairy! that common-looking old woman. Well, who *would* have believed it? Here is my wool, perhaps she has done a good turn also to me,—let us see. [*Takes the wool, begins winding, and it becomes entangled all round her hands, so that she cannot get free. Screams and pulls.*] Help me, Felicia, help!"

Felicia. "My dear Cornelia, I am indeed sorry for you [*pulls in vain at the wool*]; but do not alarm yourself, the fairy told me where she lived, and as it is just full moon I will go to-night and beg her assistance for you."

Enter Aunt Martha.

Aunt Martha. "Now then, girls, what are you doing? Is the bread put in the oven, Felicia? [*Opens the door to look at it.*] Why, goodness gracious! what a quantity you have made, child; it is enough for a regiment of soldiers; here's a pretty waste!"

Felicia. "There are just three pounds of flour, dear aunt; don't you think I am very clever to make so much of it?"

Aunt Martha (*patting her back*). "A first-rate cook indeed [*with a knowing nod*]; but I rather think the fairies must have had a hand in it. Oh, Cornelia,

mercy on us, child! what are you spoiling my wool like that for? how am I to knit with such a tangle? you must be mad. [*Goes angrily to pull it away, but cannot.*] Ha! ha! then the fairies have really been at work, eh? Ah, Cornelia, you must have shown them a little of your pride, and this is their revenge,—aye, and it serves you right too.” [*Exit, shaking her finger.*

Cornelia. “Oh, Felicia, you *will* go to the fairy, will you not? I cannot live in bonds like these.”

[*Weeps.*

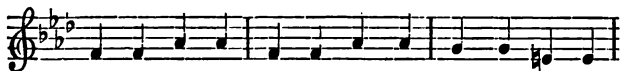
Felicia. “Yes, my dear sister, I will do everything I can for you.”

[*Tableau of sisters embracing. Curtain falls.*

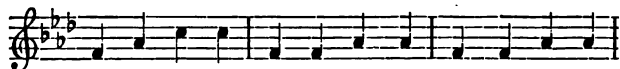
ACT II.

SCENE.—THE FAIRIES’ PALACE OR CAVE.

The Fairy Amalthea seated spinning black wool; the little fairy, Ilea, her child, flies round her singing, together with a chorus of invisible fairies.



Dark - ly spin, oh! wool of blackness, Weave the fate of



haughty maiden, Spin a thread of ut - ter dark-ness,



Weave the doom of maid - en proud.

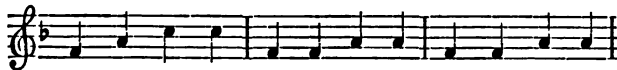
Ilea. "No, no, mother, do not spin the black wool, it always brings trouble to some mortal; spin this nice white wool, and make somebody happy. There, I will put away the black distaff." [*Gives her mother a white distaff and runs away with the black.*]

Amalthea. "Well, then, to please you I will spin a little good luck; but the black is already done, and must remain so; it is only a punishment for a naughty girl."

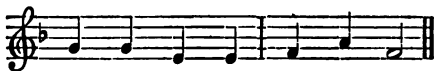
Invisible voices sing while Ilea dances round.



Light - ly spin, oh! wool of whiteness, Weave the fate of



gen - tle maid - en, Spin a thread of wondrous brightness,



Weave good for - tune to the maid.

[*Three knocks are heard.*]

Ilea. "Mother, there is some one at the door; shall I open? [*Goes to the door.*] What mortal would pass the fairies' threshold?"

Enter Felicia.

Felicia. "Oh, my kind fairy, do you also live in the house of the great Amalthea? I am glad to see

you, and thank you for my bread to-day ; but you are perhaps Amalthea herself ? ”

Amalthea (rising majestically). “ I am she ! speak, mortal ; what would you of me ? ”

Felicia (falling on her knees with hands clasped). “ Are you indeed that powerful enchantress ? Oh ! then I pray you to take away my sister’s punishment. I assure you she is quite penitent.”

Amalthea. “ She may be penitent because she feels the chastisement ; but has she really overcome her pride ? ”

Felicia (sadly). “ Ah ! I cannot tell.”

Amalthea (ironically). “ No, it is not so easy ; pride is the most difficult to correct of all faults. We fairies are the enemies of every kind of wickedness, and pride is our especial abhorrence. But calm yourself, Felicia, you are so good that I will grant the favour to you. Rise [*she takes her hand and raises her from her knees*], your sister shall be free this time ; let her take care in future. Now tell me what you wish for yourself ? ”

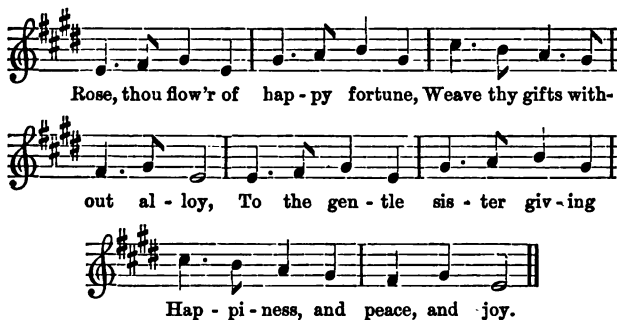
Felicia. “ I have no wishes for myself. I am young and can work ; but if you could give my aunt, who has been so good to us, a few more comforts ? ”

Amalthea. “ It is a just demand. What think you, Ilea ? ”

Ilea. "Yes, indeed, mother, let us help her. This is the good fortune you were spinning just now, is it not?"

Amalthea. "It is. Here is the wool; go and weave it."

Ilea takes the ball, and fastening it on a fairy rose-tree, flies round and round it, winding the wool like a web on the plant as she goes, singing—



Amalthea. "It is well done. Behold, maiden, the thread of your life; fate has spun it and happiness has woven it. You asked nothing for yourself, but in doing good to others you make your own happiness. Take this ring [*gives her a ring*]; if you are in any difficulty rub it, and I will come. Good-bye; I must be busy."

Felicia kisses her hand. "Fairy, I am grateful."

[*Exit.*

Amalthea goes to her cauldron and prepares it.

Ilea (sadly). "Oh, mother, what are you going to do with the cauldron ? it frightens me, for something dreadful always comes of it."

Amalthea. "Go to your bed among the rose-leaves, my child, this is no work for you. You weave the joys and pleasures, but I must deal out justice."

Ilea (with her arm imploringly round her mother's neck). "Mother, you won't put any hemlock in, will you ? it is so awful."

Amalthea. "No, no, there is no hemlock in this potion ; there are luxuries, fine dresses (*solemnly*), and also pride and ruin."

[Ilea exit, weeping. A knock is heard.]

Amalthea (flinging her old woman's cloak over her fairy dress). "Enter, mortal, but leave every human vice at the door if you would be safe."

Enter Cornelia, frightened.

Cornelia. "What horrible words ! Oh, old woman, are you here ? I really don't know which to do first, scold you for playing me such a trick, or thank you for releasing me."

Amalthea. "It is better to speak politely to fairies, for they have a certain power even when they seem to be old women."

Cornelia (with mock politeness). "Very well, accept my thanks, good woman; but would you do me another favour, to tell the powerful fairy Amalthea that I would speak to her."

Amalthea (rising and suddenly throwing off her cloak). "I am the fairy Amalthea. What do you want of me, girl?"

Cornelia (aside). "Girl, indeed, here's insolence. [Aloud.] I wish to ask a favour."

Amalthea. "For whom?"

Cornelia. "For myself, to be sure. Is it likely that I should risk my life in begging favours for other people?"

Amalthea (laughing sneeringly). "No, not very likely, I must say, ha! ha! ha! but speak quickly; what do you want?"

Cornelia. "I ask justice; I want you to render me all my stolen possessions."

Amalthea. "The demand sounds well; but what are these boasted possessions?"

Cornelia. "A fine house, rich dresses, jewels, pleasures, fêtes, and lovers, all of which I once had, and misfortune has taken away."

Amalthea. "Wicked misfortune, eh? ha! ha!"

[Laughs.]

Cornelia. "Yes, very wicked indeed; and then, in

return for all you have made me suffer, I desire a prince as my husband."

Amalthea. "A modest request truly; you know how to line your own nest, my girl; and for your aunt and sister do you ask nothing?"

Cornelia. "If we relieve my aunt of our presence she will be content enough. As for Felicia, you have already promised—"

Amalthea. "I have promised what she asked for her aunt and *you*, ungrateful girl; but she asked nothing for herself."

Cornelia (rudely). "All the more foolish she; but Felicia is always like that. Well [*stamping her foot*], are you going to give me my wish or not?"

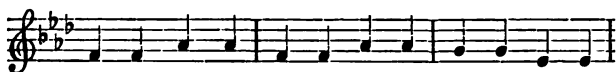
Amalthea. "You must know first that our wishes are not always good for us. If I grant this favour it will be as a chastisement."

Cornelia. "A palace! jewels! riches! and a prince for a husband, as a punishment! Well, I will willingly submit to be chastised in that manner."

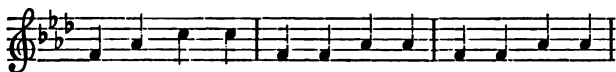
Amalthea. "Then I will brew you a potion, which you must put under your pillow and drink when midnight strikes, and you shall wake in your palace; but you must give me three hairs and three eyelashes to put in it."

Cornelia (sitting down coolly). "Take them if you like."

Amalthea pulls them out. Cornelia shrieks and then faints. The fairy puts them in the cauldron with some red fire and stirs, while invisible chorus sings—



Ma - gic caul-dron fierce - ly boil - ing, Brew the po - tion



de - le - te - rious, Burn the hairs of haughty maiden,



Grant her wish with doom mys - te - rious.

Amalthea fills a bottle with the potion, touches Cornelia with her wand, saying, "Here is your draught; drink it as I told you, and the palace and prince will surely come; but be sure not to refuse his Highness's first offer, for if you do not marry him your sister shall."

Cornelia. "Ah, no, no! I won't refuse, thank you, fairy. Good-bye. Oh joy! no more poverty, no more vulgar work!—luxuries! *fêtes*! and happiness!"

[Exit, in ecstasies.]

Amalthea takes the cauldron from the fire and calls, "Ilea, Ilea."

Enter Ilea.

Amalthea. "My dear child, I hear the voice of some one in trouble. Go out into the wood, you will find a youth near the door who has lost his way; bring him here."

Ilea. "Yes, mamma."

[*Goes out, and returns leading the Prince Florian, who has an immensely long nose.*

P. Florian (*looking round as if in a dream*).
"Where am I?—who are you?—how did I get here?"

Amalthea. "We are friends of all who suffer, if they are good; we are fairies."

P. Florian (*eagerly*). "Oh then, I pray you, have pity on me. I know that the fairies can do anything [*despondingly*]; but no! there is no hope; it was a fairy who gave me this misfortune."

Amalthea. "There are bad fairies and good ones. We are the friends of justice, and know you as the Prince Florian."

P. Florian. "Yes, I am indeed that unhappy wretch, who wanders about the world without either friends or kindred. My own father disowns me, the courtiers jeer me, maidens fly me, my life is a burden to me, and all on account of this frightful

nose, which a fairy caused to grow in a single night." [*Hides his face in his hands, the long nose appearing between them.*]

Ilea. "Mother, he is so beautiful, all but the nose; let us help him, and make him nice and handsome again."

Amalthea. "Mortal Prince, know that in the constant war between beauty and goodness, the latter always wins in the end; a personal defect more or less matters little; goodness is always beloved. You must bear your trial a little longer, for there is only one way to get rid of it."

P. Florian. "Tell me quickly, I will do anything. Oh! I cannot believe it true."

Amalthea. "The only remedy is to find a maiden who will love you for yourself and not mind your appearance."

P. Florian (in despair). "Heaven have mercy on us! this is out of the question; that will *never* happen."

Amalthea. "Oh yes, it will. Listen to me. You must go to a certain city, and take this letter [*gives a letter*] to the address written on it. The palace is inhabited by two girls, rich and beautiful; one of them will be your bride."

P. Florian. "But how am I to know which?"

Amalthea. "When you see my child, the Fairy Ilea, fly round one sister, invisible to all but you, that will be a sign that you may ask her. But if the first refuses, don't take it too much to heart, there will be a second chance."

Ilea conducts the prince out, singing, "Adieu, mortal; go to fortune, love, and joy."

Amalthea. "At last I've done. What a night it has been. Oh, what work it is with these mortals!"
[*Curtain drops.*]

ACT III.

SCENE.—*A handsome drawing-room. Cornelia and Felicia richly dressed. Felicia in a chair working, Cornelia lounging and fanning herself.*

Felicia. "What a happy change! not to have bread to make, or rooms to sweep,—don't you enjoy it, Cornelia?"

Cornelia. "I should think so, indeed. I begin to feel as if I had found my right place in the world once more. I was born for the palace, and not for the hovel; but don't let us talk of those wretched days any more, they are like a bad dream."

Felicia. "I do not think so, for when I remember poor Aunt Martha's goodness, they seem full of

blessings. How happy she must be in her nice house, and with two servants."

Cornelia. "There let her stay; I only hope she won't come here. Just imagine if at one of our grand parties—and I mean to have plenty, you must know—suppose Aunt Martha were to come in with her queer old gown, and say, 'Now then, girls, what are you about?' [*mocking the aunt's manner*] could one have the courage to say, 'Ladies and gentlemen, permit me to introduce my aunt?' No, indeed, I should rather pretend she was a spoiled old servant."

Felicia. "Oh, Cornelia, are you not afraid when you talk in that style that the fairies will take away all they have given us?"

Cornelia. "Oh, not at all; they knew my ways before—by the by, they promised me a prince for a husband, but as yet we have not seen the shadow of one." *[A knock is heard.]*

Enter Page, with a letter.

Cornelia. "A letter! who is it from? it seems a strange hand. Give it me, Felicia. [*Takes it away, opens it, and then throws it back to her.*] Signed 'your loving aunt'; it is nothing but one of Aunt Martha's rigmarmoles; you may read it."

Felicia picks it up and reads. " 'Dear nieces, my cousin, who is chamberlain at the court of the King of Montalber, has sent to me the Prince Florian, who is seeking a wife; and as I should not know what to say to a Prince, I introduce him to you, begging you to show him every courtesy which is due to his rank. I must, however, tell you that his Royal Highness suffers from a personal defect, which is much to be pitied, and I hope you will not offend his sensibilities in any way. With love,

" 'Your affectionate Aunt, &c.' "

Felicia (laughing). "Behold your Prince, Cornelia."

Cornelia. "All the better. I hope I shall admire him; but what can be this defect? is he hump-backed or lame?"

Felicia. "Or bald-headed."

Cornelia. "Perhaps he has no nose."

Felicia. "Or he is blind."

Cornelia. "Or else he has three eyes, like the girl in the fairy tale."

Felicia. "Or a horn in his forehead."

Cornelia. "Like a bull."

Felicia. "Has he a tail?"

Cornelia. "Like a donkey, ha! ha! [*Both laugh immensely.*] I should like to see him." [*A knock.*

Enter Page, to announce a visitor. He is trying to look serious, but goes into convulsions of laughter behind the Prince's back.

Page. "P—Prince Florian."

Cornelia (starting back). "Good heavens! what a nose; it is a bull's horn in reality, only it is put on in the wrong place, too low on the face."

Felicia. "Hush, Cornelia; think how he must feel it; remember your manners. [*Advances to the Prince, bowing gracefully.*] Your Royal Highness is welcome to our poor house."

Cornelia (sarcastically). "Our house is honoured by the presence of a Prince so—so—so *unique*."

P. Florian (diffidently). "You are very kind, but I should not have ventured to intrude if your aunt had not assured me you would be pleased—"

Felicia. "Most pleased to see any friend of my aunt."

Cornelia. "Your Highness is welcome,—as is any other novelty. [*Aside.*] I suppose I must do the amiable to this monster. [*Aloud, with mock reverence.*] Has your Highness travelled far?"

P. Florian. "I come from Montalber,—about one hundred miles from here."

Cornelia. "Do you soon return there?"

P. Florian (in sudden despair). "Never!"

Cornelia. "But if you are heir to the throne, when you become King—?"

P. Florian. "Ladies, you see before you an unfortunate wretch. My father pretends not to know me, and has adopted my cousin as his heir. Although I am Prince I have no kingdom; but yet I am rich enough, and could quite well maintain a wife—ah! and how I would love her."

Felicia (with a pitying glance). "I am sure you would make her happy."

Enter Ilea, the little fairy, and flies round Cornelia unseen to the girls. The Prince starts up in an ecstasy.

P. Florian. "You wonder at my joy; but it has been revealed to me in this moment that I may find here a remedy for all my woes."

Felicia and Cornelia. "Really! in what manner?"

P. Florian. "Tired of being the sport of men, I intend to trust in one kind soul alone, and have sought long for a maiden who would love me. I would take her to my beautiful country house, which is an earthly Paradise; there, with flowers, music, and all delights, we will share the kingdom of pleasure."

Cornelia (ironically). "It seems to me that your lovely castle must be a castle in Spain, Prince."

P. Florian (seriously). "No, it is not so far off. Oh, lovely maiden, it is you who are destined to inhabit it. True, you are exquisitely beautiful, and I equally ugly, but I will love and worship you for ever." [*Sinks on his knees, and takes Cornelia's hand. She pulls it away, and he falls on his nose.*]

Cornelia (half proud and half laughing). "I am grateful to your Highness for the honour, but I really could not think of accepting a beautiful prison for life, in company with a nose and a man somewhere behind it. If that is your only heritage, I fear you must still await your queen, and I will wait another Prince." [*Prince having risen during this speech, backs in horror to a chair, and sinks on it in a swoon. Felicia rushes to his aid.*]

Cornelia. "Leave him alone; he is worse than insolent to come to me with such nonsense. I feel sure he has no other inheritance than that nose, which must have grown in the family from generation to generation. If this is the only Prince the fairies send me, they have made a fool of me the second time. I declare they are too spiteful."

[*Exit in a rage.*]

Felicia (trying to wake the Prince). "Oh, poor Prince Florian, how deeply I feel for you. I could not have the heart to deny anything to one so

afflicted. Ah! he opens his eyes! he lives yet, thank Heaven."

P. Florian. "Where am I? Ah! I remember; all is lost, my hopes are gone [*sighs*], so lovely and yet so cruel." [*Shuts his eyes, and faints again.*]

Felicia. "Prince, awake. Oh, what shall I do? is he dying on my hands? Help!—ah! I remember the fairy's ring."

[*Rubs her ring, and the Fairy Amalthea appears.*]

Amalthea. "What would you ask of me, Felicia? I am here at your call."

Felicia. "Oh, good fairy, pray help this poor youth, who suffers so much."

Amalthea. "He suffers for Cornelia's cruelty. It is well; Cornelia will have to endure a worse trial than he. From henceforth all the Prince's happiness depends on you."

Felicia. "On me! oh tell me how!"

Amalthea. "I told you that in doing good to others you would render yourself happy; now you shall find it true. The Prince will soon recover; treat him with every care and consideration, and be sure not to deny the first favour he asks of you."

[*Exit.*]

P. Florian (awaking). "Am I still alive?—alas! I had hoped my wretched life was ended."

Felicia. "Dear Prince, pray do not talk so sadly, I am sure good fortune awaits you in the future."

P. Florian. "No, no, there is no hope of that. [*Enter fairy Ilea, and flies once round Felicia.*] Ah! I remember now, the fairy told me the second would be kind,—is it true?"

Felicia. "True! is what true?"

P. Florian. "That you are less cruel than your sister?"

Felicia (shyly). "I do not feel at all cruel towards you."

P. Florian (hopefully). "Is it true that you would give your life to make one who loves you happy?"

Felicia (modestly). "If—if he were as good as you are."

P. Florian (holding out his hands). "Felicia, will you marry me?"

Felicia whispers, "Yes."

P. Florian. "Oh, what joy! [*Enter fairies. Amalthea touches his nose, and it resumes its natural shape. He turns with joy to Felicia.*] You see, love, I am not the frightful wretch I seemed; your unselfish kindness has released me from my affliction."

Felicia. "I rejoice for your sake, Florian."

Enter Aunt Martha and Cornelia.

Amalthea. "Children of earth, I give the fairy's blessing on the marriage of two true hearts : happiness, wealth, and love be yours."

Aunt Martha (standing on tiptoe between them to raise her hands over their heads). "Take also my blessing, my children."

Cornelia (to Amalthea). "You have played me a pretty trick indeed, to send me a monster and expect me to know that he was a real Prince."

Amalthea. "I kept my word and sent the Prince. You refused him in spite of my warning, and must take the consequences,—you will not have another such chance. The palace shall remain yours, but as a punishment,—the future shall reveal how."

The curtain falls on a tableau of Cornelia on her knees before the fairy, who holds her wand over her threateningly, the old aunt blessing the lovers, and the fairy Ilea flying round them, all illuminated with magnesian light.

Sibyl. "What a nice play to act, papa. What fun we shall have in learning it. What part will you take, Minna?"

Minna. "I should like to be the good sister."

Sibyl. "I am so glad you have chosen that, for I prefer being the proud one, there is so much more acting in a wicked part."

Mrs. Berrie, meaningly. "I hope there is; I should like the wicked parts to be *all* acting."

Harry. "I'll be Prince Florian. I shall go to-morrow to Benson's toy-shop, and get the very longest false nose he has."

Hubert. "If he has not one long enough, I will make you one; it ought to be at least ten inches."

Elsie. "I am glad I am not the one to be married to you, I should laugh too much to speak my part. What shall I be?"

Sibyl. "The Fairy Amalthea, of course. We will make you a beautiful white and silver dress, with a crown and mystic symbols on it; you will look lovely."

Lollie. "Let me be the Fawy Ilea; I should so like to be a fawy flying wound with my wings."

Dollie. "And me too be a dear 'ittle fairy."

Mrs. Berrie. "Yes, I think Amalthea might for the occasion have two attendant sprites."

Harry. "Why not three? I am sure Hubert would look so well in gauze petticoats and wings."

Hubert, laughing. "Yes, I'm a nice suitable size! No, if I am anything I have a fancy for being the

old aunt. I could get myself up like a very decent imitation of Mrs. Figgins in a frilled cap and false front."

The girls. "Oh, that would be fun!"

The President. "I have been very quiet for a long time, to see if any one would think of me, but nobody does. Am I to do nothing but look on, I should like to know?—that will be jolly amusing."

Sibyl, in distress. "Oh, Freddie, dear, there is not a part left. Will you dress up like a girl and be the proud sister? I will give it up willingly."

Freddie. "What! take your part and leave you nothing? 'tisn't likely I should be selfish enough for that."

Mrs. Berrie. "Papa will put in a little part for you. We want a smart little footman, to bring in the letters and introduce the Prince, &c."

Freddie. "Oh yes, that will do; I can go into fits of laughter in a corner when I see his nose, and make fun of him behind his back. Yes, I will be the footman; mind you sew enough buttons on my coat, Sibbie."

Sibyl. "Oh, you must not have buttons! both you and the Prince must be in antique costumes, plumed hats and hose and doublet, you know."

Minna. "And we girls?"

Sibyl. "We will have square-cut bodies and elbow puffs, and loose silver waist-belts to loop our skirts up.—Lovely costumes! Come and let us look over our charade dresses, and see what we shall want."

Mrs. Berrie. "I see that this new idea has been the death blow to the Scribbleological Club. Private theatricals have taken its place."

Freddie. "We have had a good deal of fun out of the club; but it would get to be rather a bore if we kept on for ever writing stories, especially as more than half of them are girls' stories." This is said with rather an air of disdain, which brings various shades of disapproval on the feminine faces. Then putting on his business air Freddie adds, "Ladies and gentlemen, we will make an end of these meetings; the box is empty, and nobody is inclined to scribble any more."

Harry. "Speak for yourself, Mr. President; I'll write as many tales as you like."

Hubert. "If I were the president I should make a better speech than that to wind-up with."

Freddie, jumping down from the president's chair. "Do it then, if you don't like mine."

Hubert, bowing with great seriousness. "Ladies, and gentlemen, the honoured president has deputed me to announce to you the closing for this season of

the meetings of the Scribbleological Club, hoping that they may be resumed at a future time under different auspices."

Freddie, muttering. "Different *bosh*!"

Sibyl, clapping her hands. "Hear! hear!"

Harry, interrogatively. "Where? where?"

Minna, pointing to the speaker. "There! there!"

(Laughs.)

Mr. Berrie, rising. "I move that the thanks of the meeting be returned to Mr. President, Mr. Secretary, the court-usher, and all the members and authors."

Hubert. "Especially to the honorary members."

The court-usher flings his cocked hat in the air, crying, "Hurrah!" The ex-president turns somersault over the arms of the large chair, and coming upon his feet again, cries, "Hurrah!" The girl graduates applaud, and the Scribbleological Club is over. The Berries have the sixth-thousandth *new* IDEA,—private theatricals.

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N.B.—No alterations have been made in the Lessons, the changes are confined to the omission of the later pages. The appendices are continued in each book.

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